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WHEN THE RAYS OF THE LAMP FELL FULL UPON THE HEAP, HE SAW AT ONCE THAT IT WAS A WOMAN.

A FAIR FACE;

Or, OUT IN THE WORLD.

BY BARTLEY T. CAMPBELL,
Author of "The Girl Wife," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

UNDER THE STORM.

It was an ugly night. It had been raining fiercely all day, and now the roads were ankle deep in mud, the trees dripping, and Mill Creek—bank full—rolled its yellow flood noisily to the Ohio,

Dark as was the night, however—black as was the sky, and miry as were the roads, there was a woman abroad, under the fury of a terrible equinoctial storm—a storm, the like of which had not been seen for many a day before.

She was a slight, girlish creature, dressed in plain, unpretending black, her head covered by a sort of cloak, which also served the purpose—in a partial way, at least—of a wrapping; and her small feet were covered with cloth gaiters, which, soaking as they were, afforded but a sorry protection.

The darkness was too deep to permit of her face being seen, but when the lightning blazed out, as it did now and then, it revealed the fact

that she was drenched to the skin, and was only able to stagger forward.

"Oh! if I could reach Cincinnati," she said, clasping her hands and looking up at the inky sky. "Oh, God! in your mercy, have pity and help me!" she added, while the cold rain fell upon her upturned face like human tears. "I cannot go much further."

There was a rumble of carriage-wheels, and then a pair of lights gleamed away ahead, along the road, and the girl knew they were on the front of a vehicle.

"I will stop them and ask to be taken to the city!" she exclaimed, at once, but the next moment she stepped out of the path and allowed the carriage to rattle by. It was a stylish affair. The horses were steaming and the driver soaking, but from within came peals of laughter and the voices of men.

The woman pushed back the tangled skeins of black hair from her face, and gazed after the rattling vehicle. Finally it disappeared in a curve of the road, and then the girl, shaking her head, said, sadly:

"No, I dare not speak to such as these; they are not in the mood to sympathize with a poor outcast." She shivered as with ague, as she said this, and wrung her hands fiercely as if she would rub a stain of some sort from them.

Then she bent her head before the storm, and trudged onward more rapidly than before.

Her speed soon gave out, however, and then she toiled more slowly through the mud.

The winds sighed; the rain fell with an even patter; and Mill Creek roared its hoarse song in the deep blackness to the right of the roadway.

A half-mile further, and the girl stopped and listened to the mad waters.

"What if I end it all here?" she exclaimed, speaking aloud. "That stream would stifle my cries and end my misery; and then, too, there would be no trace left."

She started from the path in the direction of the creek; walked a few paces; paused; then turning, she fled in the storm, and cityward, again crying half-aloud:

"Oh, no! no! I can't do that; I'm not brave enough for that."

On she sped, as if flying from the demon of the flood who whispered to her of rest and oblivion in a luring way that almost won her over to suicide; but she resisted; love for life was still strong within that youthful breast; and, sinful as she felt herself to be, she dared not face the judgment seat.

"No, I must live on," she muttered; "I must live for penance—and revenge!"

She clenched her fists tightly again, as she said this, and held her breath hard.

The rain fell faster; the darkness grew as black as velvet; her feet were very sore and tired; still she struggled heroically forward, until the lights gleaming from the old Mill

Creek House twinkled through the mist and rain, like guiding stars.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, and then she tottered, grasped at a hedge surrounding a nabob's domain, and fell, face downward, on the cold, hard, wet road.

The wind lifted up her cloak, and the rain dropped steadily down upon her, as if it would cleanse her of the soil of travel, and of the stain of sin as well.

CHAPTER II

AN EVENT.

THERE had been a grand ball; and the beauty of Cincinnati, set in precious gems and sheeny fabrics, fluttered out into the streets of the Queen City, leaning on arms covered with glossiest broadcloth. There were showers of curls, too, and dainty-slippered feet and gloved hands—lavender and purest white, scarcely soiled after the revels of the evening.

The night was too inclement to permit of walking, even for the shortest distance, and so there were plenty of ebony vehicles on hand to carry the precious cargo of merry-makers homeward.

The last to leave the brilliantly-illuminated entrance was a fair young girl, and a large, well-formed man.

He was dressed in the extreme of fashion, wore patent-leather boots, a soft mauve-colored necktie, and white satin waistcoat, with pantaloons and coat of deep black. His eyes were blue as summer skies, and his hair, of which there was an abundance, was light, wavy and silken.

He was very stylish, and very handsome, too.

An elegant equipage drove up as they made their appearance in the doorway, and soon the couple were rattling down Eighth street. Near the corner of Baymiller avenue, in front of a splendid residence, the driver drew the reins, and leaping down from his perch, opened the door of the carriage.

The handsome gentleman gave the young lady his hand; led her up the steps, and stood by her side until the door was opened to admit her. Then he pressed her hand warmly, and said:

"I hope you have had a pleasant time, Miss Grace."

"Oh, very! Thank you, Mr. Watterson; I'm sure I owe my enjoyment entirely to the excellent care you have taken of me."

"Don't mention it, Miss Alward. Believe me, I'm always ready to serve you."

He kissed her on the cheek as he said this, and then, without waiting for an answer, ran down the steps and leaped in among the cushions once more.

"Where will you go, Mr. Chauncey?" asked the driver, putting his head in at the window.

"Go! Why, where do you suppose I want

to go at this hour of the night, you block-head?"

"I didn't know, sir; but I thought, maybe, you wanted to see Nellie or the other girl before you'd sleep."

"Michael Rand, don't you know me better than that?" was the reply. "When I visit Miss Alward I never go to either a gambling-house or to—"

"Oh, very well, sir," was the answer, and then Michael Rand clambered up to his seat, and giving the spirited team full rein, the carriage went rattling over the cobble-stones, toward the west end, at a rapid rate.

Presently the houses began to grow scarce, and they were out in the suburbs on the direct road to Cumminsville.

"Ah, by my soul! What's that?"

Michael Rand made use of these words as the horses shied to the right, and he detected something black, like the form of a woman, lying almost beneath him.

"What the deuce is the matter with you? Confound you! go on!" came from within the vehicle.

"There's something lying down here, sir, almost under the horses' hoofs, sir."

"Something? Well, of course—go on."

"But, sir, it's a woman, I think."

"You do, eh?" Chauncey Watterson was out on the muddy roadside in an instant. "Where is she?"

"There, sir. Just to your left a bit," and Michael pointed with his whip.

Chauncey made no answer, but peering through the darkness in the direction indicated, he was not slow in discovering a blackish heap, that did look, even in the gloom, remarkably like a woman.

"Get that lamp out of the carriage, Rand, and hold it here."

The man obeyed with alacrity, and when the rays of the lamp fell full upon the heap, he saw at once that Michael's conjecture had been correct—it was a woman.

"Here, bear a hand, Mike," said Chauncey; and the two men lifted the woman up and placed her in the carriage. Neither of them looked in the mud-stained face; there was no time for comment, for the woman was either dead or close to the confines of eternity—so close, in fact, that no time was to be lost in procuring aid.

"Drive right home, Rand, and I'll run over the fields for Dr. Glosser," said Chauncey, as soon as the girl was placed in the vehicle.

Michael Rand mounted the box quickly, and, cracking the long whip, was off.

He only drove a few hundred yards, then turned into a long, shady avenue, and a minute after, the carriage stood in front of a long, rambling structure, with many windows and gables, and two battlemented turrets.

In response to Michael's ring, a stiff-starched porter opened the hall-door and cautiously peeped out.

"Who's there?" he asked, in a slow, drawing voice. "Is it you, Michael Rand?"

"Yes; it's me—Michael Rand—and more than me, too."

By this time the coachman had lifted the unconscious tenant of the carriage in his stout arms, and was making his way toward the stupid porter.

"Why, bless me! that's a woman," exclaimed the porter.

"I should say it was," answered Michael, shoving the porter aside, and stepping into the hall with his burden. "Is there a good fire in the sitting-room, Johnson?"

"A very good fire, sir. But, where is Master Chauncey?"

"Gone for the doctor—old Glosser. Is the madam awake, yet?"

"Yes, she is waiting for you two to come home."

By this time the sitting-room had been reached, and Michael Rand placed his burden on an old-fashioned lounge, and bid Johnson turn on the light.

The latter promptly did as he was requested, flooding the apartment with a soft radiance, and illuminating the face of the unconscious occupant of the lounge.

"Why, Rand, my boy, she's a perfect beauty!" exclaimed the porter, lifting his eyes and hands at once in admiration—"a perfect beauty, sir!"

The old stupid servitor was right. She was beautiful. Her face was rounded, and had a peach-like bloom in it; her lips, daintily cut, had a tempting, pretty pout in them, and one could see, although her eyes were closed, that they were large, and that they must be dark, too, since the lashes lay like black silk fringe on either cheek. Masses of blackish hair were coiled, like the turban of an Oriental beauty, about her well-shaped head, and out from under her soiled garments peeped a foot, so small and childish in proportions, that it might have belonged to a girl of twelve instead of a well-developed woman of twenty, as it did.

"Johnson, tell the madam at once," said Rand; "the girl is very ill, and women generally know what is good for women."

The porter heard the order, but did not move; he was lost in admiration of the beautiful stranger's face.

"Are you a-going, Johnson?"

"Yes, sir!"

The old servant straightened himself up, and, sighing, turned to go on his errand. But, there was no occasion for his going now—Mrs. Watterson stood in the doorway. She was a handsome woman still, although past fifty; and, as she swept into the room, there was a certain majesty of mien, that told, more eloquently than words could do, of the pride that was in her heart.

"What's the matter here, Rand? and, good

gracious, what's the meaning of this?" were her first words.

"This poor girl was found at the bend of the road, and Mr. Chauncey bid me bring her home with me," answered the driver.

"Home with you! Chauncey bid you do this, do you say?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And where is he?"

"Gone for old Glosser, ma'am."

"The doctor?"

"Yes, ma'am, the doctor!"

The old lady knit her brows, and laying her hand on Rand's arm, said, solemnly and slowly:

"Michael Rand, did you ever see this girl before?"

The coachman looked up, surprised, and, blushing crimson, replied:

"No, ma'am, never."

"Nor Chauncey does not know her?"

"I think not, ma'am. He wouldn't have ever knowed she was in the road only for me, ma'am. I seen her from the box."

"I am very glad to hear it," and saying this, Mrs. Watterson bent over the young girl and scanned closely her features. "Poor thing! beautiful and sinful," she said, half-aloud; then, turning to the two men who stood silently by, she said: "She is recovering her senses. Johnson, do you go and call the two girls, and let this woman be brought to the spare room, back. She will need attention immediately."

Johnson left the apartment.

"And now, Rand, you had better put away the horses. You are not needed here."

Rand looked at Mrs. Watterson; then at the face upon the sofa, and then turned away to the stables, saying, as he went:

"I thought it was something of that kind, myself."

Scarce had the two men left the room, than the girl opened her eyes, moaned, and closed them again.

Mrs. Watterson took from her pocket a costly lace handkerchief, and, after soaking it in a glass of water, which stood upon the table close by, applied it to the forehead of her strange guest.

The water helped to cool the feverish brow; then the color came back into the rounded cheeks; and again the long, quivering lashes lifted, and the two women looked into each other's eyes.

"Don't you feel better now?" asked the old lady.

"Yes; I'm better; I can go now. I'm not so weak," was the reply. The girl raised herself up almost to a sitting posture, and attempted to rise upon her feet, but reeled, and fell back once more.

"You are not able to walk, you see," said the elder woman. "Where did you want to go?"

The girl's face blushed crimson as she answered:

"Oh, I don't know! Somewhere in the city, where I cannot be found, either by my father or my friends."

"Then you are not a wife?"

"No, madam." The girl hid her face now, and the hot tears stained her cheeks.

"You have done very wrong; have been very sinful, and cannot expect the sympathy of the good and pure."

The old lady's voice was cold and hard as she uttered these words, and the hand she had laid upon the stranger's brow she now wiped very deliberately with her damp handkerchief, as if she would remove the stain she felt was there.

The girl did not reply at once, but, after a moment, said:

"You don't know, madam, how keenly I feel the sinfulness of my position; but you do not—you cannot know—how I was tempted by one whom I thought honorable and truthful."

"Young ladies should have better sense than to believe everything told them. They have warnings enough, surely."

There was no reply to this, and when Mrs. Watterson glanced down to learn the reason of her companion's silence, she saw that she had fainted again. Before she could do aught, the door opened, and Dr. Glosser and Chauncey Watterson entered the room, closely followed by the two servant-girls, for whom Johnson had been dispatched.

"Is she living yet?" asked the physician, rubbing his glasses.

"Yes; miserable people like her are not easily killed," answered Mrs. Watterson, significantly.

By this time Chauncey had reached the side of the sofa.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Elinor Gregg!" He started back with a wild, scared face, and his mother, looking sternly up into his face, said:

"My son, what do you know of this woman?"

"I met her in the country once," he stammered, growing red up to the roots of his hair. "and again at Dayton."

"There is nothing between you two? On your honor?"

"Nothing," replied Chauncey: "only I met her there, and am astonished to find her here, and in such a condition, too. It really for the moment shocked me."

He was cool now, and Mrs. Watterson said, in a whisper:

"I believe you, my boy, and I'm glad to hear that you are not a partner in her sin."

"She had better be removed to a chamber," said the doctor.

"Can she not be taken to the Infirmary?" put in Chauncey.

"No; it would be almost certain death. As it is, it is only a chance that she will sur-

vive the excitement and exposure of this night."

Mrs. Watterson ordered the insensible girl to be taken up-stairs at once, and when the servant had done so, she returned to the sitting-room to await the return of Dr. Glosser.

CHAPTER III

FACE TO FACE!

THE little French time-piece on the heavy marble mantel was ringing sharply three o'clock, when the fussy old physician came in, tapping his silver snuff-box in a self-satisfied manner, and looking grave and wise.

"Well?" said Mrs. Watterson, looking up.

"Well, she's all right—getting along amazingly fine. She will have to be kept very quiet, though."

"She is not out of danger yet, then?"

"No; not out of danger, but I think—"

"Will she live or die?"

The imperious manner of the questioner caused the old doctor to raise his eyebrows in surprise, and he said very slowly, in reply, and without lowering his brows:

"Live is the word, I think."

"It's a bad thing for her, then. There is no room in the world for creatures like her."

Mrs. Watterson was rich and proud, and Dr. Glosser did not think it necessary for him to reply to the bitter words that fell upon his ear with a pitiless sound, and so he only took a pinch of snuff and nodded at the fire.

"When do you think she will be ready to move?" asked the old woman, after a moment's silence.

"Well, in ten days."

"Not before that?"

"Not without great risk."

"It's too bad she should have laid down at our door. Surely, she could have made to the Mill Creek House."

"It was very unfortunate," was all the little doctor said.

There was another pause; then the woman looked up and said:

"Doctor, you must not let her die here. It would never do, you know; and you must never, under any circumstances, speak of her being here."

"Very well," was the reply.

"As soon as she is able enough to move," continued Mrs. Watterson, "she must be taken to the Infirmary. You know this would create unpleasant scandal, were it to get abroad, among our set."

The doctor nodded.

"Not that I would be cruel or un-Christianlike, but, you see a person's enemies will talk."

"Doctor, the young lady is worse," interrupted Sarah, the cook, putting her head in at the doorway. "You had better come right away."

The doctor looked at Mrs. Watterson, as if to say, "by your leave, madam," and then hurried to the sick chamber. When he had gone, Mrs. Watterson called the servant to her side.

"Sarah, you must promise never to speak of this girl being in the house. It would be terrible were it to get out, you know."

"Yes, ma'am, it would."

"Then you will please speak to Ellen and Jane, and tell them it is my wish that nothing be said of this."

"I will, ma'am. They'll do what you axes 'em, ma'am."

"Let me see that they do and I will not forget them in return."

Within the next half-hour all the servants had been duly cautioned, and Chauncey, who had returned from the stables with Rand, sat planning with his aristocratic mother how the presence of Elinor Gregg could best be kept from the public.

"She cannot be moved now. Glosser says it would endanger her life," ventured Mrs. Watterson.

"The dilemma is ugly enough, to be sure; but, as soon as she is able, she must be taken to the Infirmary. That's the best and only thing we can do—at least, it is the only thing that strikes me as feasible," returned Chauncey.

"Yes; you are right, my son. But, how did it come that you brought her here in the first place?"

"Why, it's all chargeable on that stupid fellow, Rand; and then, you know, I never dreamed of anything like that being the matter, or I should have driven into town with her."

"I wish you had done so," and Mrs. Watterson bit her thin upper lip with vexation. "Here we have a pretty condition of things to be expecting Lucy home from school every day."

A shadow flitted across Chauncey Watterson's face at the mention of Lucy's return, and after a momentary pause, he said:

"When do you expect sister Lucy?"

"Well, almost at any hour she is likely to come."

"She has fixed upon no day yet?"

"No; but Kate Allen left Pleasant Grove on Tuesday last, and she says Lucy was packing up then to come home."

Chauncey was about to make a remark when he was interrupted by the entrance of Dr. Glosser.

"My dear madam," said the diminutive man of physic, "the affair is over, and mother and child are doing well. It's a girl!"

"It matters very little, doctor, to what sex the little unfortunate belongs," answered Mrs. Watterson, coldly; then added: "I suppose you will come over in the morning again?"

"Oh, yes; I gave her a soothing opiate. She will sleep until morning now."

"Well, doctor," put in Chauncey, "this has been a larger contract than I expected. But, no matter; you shall be well paid."

"I—I knew that, sir," replied the little doctor, drawing up his mouth like a closing purse. "But it's very kind of you folks here to take a poor waif like her in and care for her so tenderly; it's very kind indeed."

"It would not be right to allow a human creature to die in the street," replied the young man. "Besides, the girl may be of good family, you know. Judging from the society I met her in, at Dayton, I should say she was."

Mrs. Watterson looked quickly up, and darted a furtive, but searching glance at her son.

He was very calm, and evidently unconcerned.

"She does look to be a nice sort of a person," said Dr. Glosser, in reply to Chauncey's words—"a very nice sort of a person."

The doctor took out his snuff, indulged in a pinch, and tapping the box with his red knuckles, repeated—"a nice sort of a person, indeed."

"We will expect you again, in the morning, doctor," said Mrs. Watterson, rising and moving toward the door.

Glosser took the hint, and, buttoning his coat up tightly under his puffy, bedimpled chin, strutted out into the darkness and storm.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE MESHES.

WHEN the sunlight stole in through the heavy lace drapery, and danced in bright, fantastic patches on the rich carpet which covered the floor of the chamber in which Elinor Gregg lay, it found her flushed and excited. She scarce could realize where she was, on opening her eyes for the first time; everything seemed so strange and grand to her—so much unlike the plain, roomy farm-house where she had been born, and which she had left the day before, with the expectation of never seeing either it or its inmates again.

It only needed a glance around the room, and a shy, coy peep at the little form that nestled up closely to her, to make her realize the depths into which she had fallen. Then came the pain, the woe, the heartache—the remorse.

"Oh! why—why did I ever listen to his promises? Why did I put so much faith in that man?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands, while the hot tears started into her eyes, and her heart throbbed as if it would break. "And you," she continued, turning and looking at the infant by her side—"you are destined for—misery, and shame, and disgrace. Oh, my God! have pity on us twain! have pity, and take us home to you! We are not strong enough to live such a life as must be ours!"

She clasped her thin hands together, tightly, until the blue veins seemed about to burst, and

raised her dark, luminous eyes heavenward, and her scarlet lips moved in silent prayer for pity and oblivion.

The sunlight crowned the purplish blackness of her hair with a coronet of glory; a bird hopped upon the window-sill and sung a cheerful song; the infant doubled up its dimpled fists and tried to cram them into its little rosebud of a mouth, wholly unconscious of Elinor Gregg's pain and degradation, or of its own miserable fate.

The day was many hours old before Dr. Glosser came; then he only remained a few minutes, and was gone. He had scarce left the sick-room when Chauncey Watterson entered.

Elinor was lying with her face to the wall, crying silently; and, although she heard his footsteps upon the carpet, she did not turn her head. She was not in a mood to see visitors.

He advanced to the bedside until he saw that she was awake, then he turned away and locked the door, and drew the curtains closer together.

His movements, so cat-like, the grating of the key in the lock, and the deeper gloom of the room, aroused the girl's fears, and lifting herself up on one elbow, she met the gaze of Chauncey Watterson.

She was about to scream, but he prevented that by covering her mouth with his hand.

"You're a fool!" he said. "Don't you know me, Elinor?"

"Yes, I know you, Chauncey Watterson—know you well! Would to Heaven I did not know you."

"Now, don't go on in that way. If you do, it will make matters worse."

"How much worse could I be?" she demanded, her eyes flashing, and her face growing whiter than the pillows among which she lay.

"A good deal worse," he replied. "I am prepared to do you justice if you have a little sense. Do you know where you are?"

"No; I was picked up from the roadway and carried here when I fell from sheer exhaustion. Oh, Chauncey Watterson, you have cruelly wronged me!"

"Hush—sh! Don't start to cry now. Listen to me. You are in my mother's house."

"No, no, that's impossible—that could not be," cried Elinor, waving her hand, as if she would drive the possibility of such a thing from her.

"Well, no matter about the possibility," he said, sternly; "I'm talking of facts. You are in my mother's house."

She believed him now, and, raising herself up until her face almost touched the face that bent over her, she asked:

"And does she know who I am, and—" she covered her face now—"and what I am?"

"She knows you are a mother and not a wife, but she does not know that I am that child's father."

"But she will know it; the secret cannot be

long kept, and, unless you redeem the promise made to me, I'll blazon it before the world! I am deep in the mire; lost to society, to home and friends; but I will not bear the brand alone. You, Chauncey Watterson—you will have to bear your share of the infamy you originated."

The girl was excited; her cheeks were crimson, and her eyes held a baleful, mischievous light.

Chauncey Watterson was excited, too, and alarmed, as well, and his hands twitched nervously, as if he would like to bury them in her white velvet throat.

"You must not speak so loud," he hissed; "you will have the house about our ears in a moment, if you go on in that way."

"Well, they may as well come now as later."

"No, they may not, Elinor Gregg. You are playing with fire. Take care, or it may burn you."

The girl looked into his face; it was full of a terrible threat, which, desperate as she was, awed her.

"What do you propose doing?" she asked.

"I propose taking you over to Covington. I have a nice little house there on the bank of Licking river. There you will be safe from intrusion, and, as soon as I can get my mother to start me in business, or give me a part of her money, why, then, we will be married, as I promised you in the first place we would be."

The girl's face lit up.

"Do you really mean that, Chauncey Watterson? Are you in earnest?"

"Certainly I'm in earnest. Now pay attention to me for a moment. You see, it won't do for me to remain here long. They might suspect, and my lady mother has vague ideas that her son has been a little naughty, and it won't do to feed this suspicion."

"But is not Lucy—your sister Lucy—home from school?" broke in Elinor.

"No, but may come at any moment. You see the awful fix I'm in. Were sister Lucy to come while you are here, knowing the intimacy that existed between us at Xenia, she would let the cat out of the bag, and ruin us both," he replied.

"Yes, yes; I don't want to meet Lucy," said Elinor, hiding her face. "Take me away from here as soon as you can."

"Now you talk sense," said Chauncey. "To-night, when the house is all asleep, I'll have a carriage brought from the city for you and the baby. The doctor says it will not harm you a bit."

"And where will you take us?"

"To my cottage in Covington."

"And the marriage, Chauncey—can not we be married privately, and at once?"

"If you wish it, of course we can."

She looked up searchingly into his face. His eyes were bright and blue, and his face looked frank and honest.

"Oh, Chauncey Watterson, how I've trusted you! You won't deceive me—say you will not!"

"This is worse than idle," he answered, with an impatient gesture. "I never meant to deceive you. My plans have not worked as smoothly as I intended they should, but now things look all right, and in a short time I will be able to redeem my pledges without sacrificing my prospects."

She believed him now; he spoke so frankly, and there was a plausibility in what he said. So she told him at once that her confidence in him was unshaken, and that she was willing to be guided wholly by him. So forgiving is a loving woman!

"Then to-night I'll come for you."

He stooped down, kissed her, and stole out of the room on tip-toe.

Elinor Gregg listened until his footfalls died away; then she raised up her hands and thanked God for the ray of light she thought she saw glimmering through the gloom.

CHAPTER V.

MASTER AND MAN.

WHEN Chauncey Watterson left Elinor Gregg he went immediately to the stables and bid Rand saddle his favorite, Ney.

"Bound for the city, sir?" asked Rand, as he led the beautiful sorrel into the yard.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Back to-day?"

"I suppose so."

"Will Johnson wait up for you?"

"No; I have a night-key. Good-by, Rand."

He waved the short riding-whip at the driver; he took off his hat to Mrs. Watterson, who was peering through one of the parlor windows, and cantering down the shady avenue, was lost to sight.

As soon as he reached the open roadway he buried the spurs into the sides of his horse, and the animal sprang forward at a gallop. A half an hour at a pell-mell pace and he turned into what was then Western, but is now Central avenue. The street was so thronged with vehicles and pedestrians that Chauncey was forced to permit his panting steed to walk slowly until the corner of Fifth street was gained. Then he dashed on again up to Vine, where he alighted and gave his horse in charge of a negro whom he called Gilbert.

"I'm going in here. I'll be back presently, Gilbert."

He placed in the black palm a piece of silver and disappeared in the grimy doorway of a tall, bleak-looking, shutterless house of three stories which stood on the west side of the street.

The stairs he ascended were besmeared with rubbish, and they creaked under his heavy footfalls as if they were unwilling to bear the additional weight.

who frequented it, he mounted his steed and rode to the home of Grace Alward.

She was "at home," to Mr. Watterson, at all times; and so, when the ebony servant recognized Chauncey that morning, he ushered him into the reception-room at once.

"Miss Grace, sah, will be down direc'ly," he said, and, making a profound salaam, disappeared.

Chauncey appeared very much at home in that elegant reception-room. He leaned back in the soft depths of a plush velvet chair and surveyed with a careless glance the magnificent appointments.

The lace upon the windows was heavy and costly; the carpet of the richest texture and most elaborate pattern, while the furniture must have been imported, he thought; it was so entirely unlike anything he had ever seen in America before.

And as he sat there, and caught his form, again and again reflected in the tall pier mirrors, he thought how very shabby was the home of Elinor Gregg, and how utterly impossible it was for him to marry a poor farmer's daughter.

"No, no, I could never sacrifice myself in that way," he said, rising and walking to one of the windows.

The street was bright with summer sunlight, and there was a group of daintily-clad children upon the opposite sidewalk listening to a pair of ragged boys playing "Home, Sweet Home," on a pair of dirty-looking violins.

The sad, sweet music touched the children's hearts, and, although they had been romping before the arrival of the musicians, not a word was spoken until the last notes died away. The little minstrels did not pass around the hat as usual when they had finished playing; they saw there was no use in doing that, and, putting their instruments carefully away in diminutive green bags, they were about to start down the street when their attention was attracted by Chauncey Watterson tapping on the window behind which he stood.

The oldest of the two—a bright, dark-eyed boy of eight or thereabouts—was the first to notice the call.

"Romney, we're called by that 'ere gentleman in the window."

The child addressed was a pale, sickly little fellow. He never spoke a word in reply but followed his brother across the street silently.

"Play something, my little fellows," said Chauncey, casting them a silver dime.

The eldest picked up the coin, that had rolled jinglingly around the pavement, and passed it to his brother.

"Here, Romney," he said, "take charge."

The little fellow took the money, placed it in a little bag which he had strung around his neck, and then the musical mendicants broke out into a plaintive Italian air, singing in a spirited manner the words in English.

While they were singing, Grace Alward stole into the room on tiptoe, and tapped Chauncey playfully upon the shoulder.

He turned quickly, glanced down into her beautiful blue eyes, over the ripples of her golden hair, and, bending low, kissed her cheek.

"Is this your concert?" she said, laughingly.

"Yes. I'm an impressario for the first time," he answered, taking her hands in one of his, and leading her away from the window.

They sat down on a soft sofa in the shadiest corner of the room, and were soon engaged in discussing the ball of the previous evening.

The young musicians played four or five airs unheeded; then packed their violins away, and strolled down the street in quest of custom.

"Romney, trade is a leetle dull to-day, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"What do you say if we count our earnings?"

"Well, I don't care," said Romney, taking the bag from about his neck. "Where will we sit, Van?"

"Why, here on these steps," replied Van.

The little fellow glanced upward. They were standing in front of a large Gothic church, the spire of which towered over the doorway two hundred feet, surmounted at last by a glittering finger, which little Romney thought was touching the sky itself.

"Don't let's sit here, Van," he said, turning to the big boy. "That spire's a-comin' down on our heads."

"No, it ain't," replied Van, laughing; "I used to think it was a-comin' over, too, but it's just the clouds as is a-goin' that other way."

Little Romney opened his large dark eyes and bit his nether lip, and, without speaking of the surprise that was in him, he followed Van up the steps, and emptied his money-bag on the cold door-step.

They counted it over very carefully. There were a good many large pennies, three five-cent pieces, and one shining silver dime.

"That was a lucky haul, Romney, old boy," said Van, lifting up the dime and rattling it on the stone.

"Yes," Romney meekly answered; "very good."

"It will buy ma tea, anyway," said Van, "an' we'll have a mess when we go home. Won't we?"

"Yes," Romney answered. "But it's cold here, Van; let's go home now."

Van shook his head decidedly and said:

"Tell you what we'll do, Romney?"

"Well?"

"We'll go down Broadway to the levee. The

mail-boat for Louisville will be goin' out 'bout this time. What ye say?"

The pale, fragile little Romney said simply. "Well," and, with a sigh, he picked up his little violin and the lads trudged down the street together and were soon lost in the crowd and bustle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD HOUSE BY THE RIVER.

On the night succeeding Elinor Gregg's arrival at Walnut Grove she sat up in bed, nervously awaiting the coming of Chauncey Watterson. The house was very still. The clock on the mantel seemed to be ticking drowsily, as if the pendulum was weary of its monotonous labors, while, without, the night-wind moaned drearily, and the trees sighed, as if sentient.

Presently there was a light footfall in the corridor; then the door-knob turned, and Chauncey Watterson, his person enveloped in a huge cloak, stole into the room.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked, his voice trembling with excitement.

"I don't know. I'm afraid, Chauncey, this is going to kill me."

"And you won't go, then?"

"I did not say that," she said. "I am willing to go, but my ability to do so was what I spoke of."

"Here," he said, taking up a huge robe which during the day he had carried there; "I'll wrap this about you. It will keep the air from you until you reach the carriage."

"But the baby, Chauncey—what about the baby?"

"I have a friend here who will carry her, dearest."

Saying this, he took Elinor up in his arms, and bore her from the apartment.

She was not heavy—at least he thought her extremely light, and when he had passed the hall-door and could see the stars, he started on a run across the lawn to the roadway, where he placed her in a close carriage, already half-filled with blankets and pillows.

"Where are you, Blaisley?" he asked, looking around in the darkness.

"Here I am, sir," replied the individual named; "and I've got the young kid, too. Where shall I put it?"

"Give it to me."

The man did as requested, and Chauncey took the little one tenderly in his arms and placed it on its mother's lap.

"How do you feel, dear?" he asked, putting his hand on Elinor's cold face.

There was no response, and Chauncey exclaimed, in alarm:

"My God, Blaisley, I am afraid the girl is dead."

"You don't say so," replied Blaisley. "If she is, we are in a box, that's all."

"Hush—sh! She moves," said Chauncey.

"No; she is not dead. She has only fainted. Have you a drop of liquor about you?"

"Always carry it," returned Blaisley, producing a small flask which he handed to Chauncey. "Here."

"Now, Blaisley, get up and drive as rapidly as you can, and I'll look after these folks."

Chauncey stepped into the carriage, and Blaisley mounted the box, and soon the vehicle was dashing along the lonely road at a fearful rate.

An hour of rapid driving and the foot of Fifth street was reached.

At the time of which we write it was not densely populated as now, and, indeed, may be said to have been outside the city altogether. There were no lamp-posts west of John street, and neither ferry nor bridge to Covington, unless we call a skiff which made semi-occasional trips across the broad Ohio by that name.

Just below where Fifth street now terminates, the carriage stopped, and Blaisley scrambled down from the box and put his head in at the door.

"Will I go forward and see how things are?" asked Blaisley.

"Yes; you had better; but hurry up. The girl has fainted again."

Blaisley closed the door softly, and walked rapidly along the bank of the river until he caught sight of a light glinting through the darkness and fog.

Then he returned to the carriage, remounted his perch, and drove toward the rickety old frame from which the light gleamed. It had once been a suburban residence; but that must have been many years before, for the paint had dried into the weather-boarding, and the shutters hung all awry and creaked dismally as the night-wind swung them to and fro. There had formerly been a flower-garden, and a stretch of lawn sweeping down to the margin of the rushing river, but now, there were only scrubs, and roots, and brambles, through which ran a path, like a yellow ribbon, to the water's edge.

Through this old garden, Chauncey carried Elinor Gregg, as if she was only a child. He was followed closely by Ned Blaisley, with the baby in his arms.

When the wide, uncarpeted hall was reached, Blaisley shouted:

"Meg, show us a light—show us a light, will you?"

There was a noise as if made by the opening and closing of a creaking door, and then, on the stairs, appeared an old crone of sixty or thereabouts, with an inclosed lamp in her hand.

"Hold the light up so as a fellow can see his finger before him," shouted Blaisley.

The woman did as directed, and Chauncey staggered up the bare stairs with his burden still in his arms.

"This way, please," said the old woman,

crossing the upper hall and pushing open a door which led into a rather neat chamber, where a large drift-wood fire roared and crackled. "I've got things as comfortable as I could on such short notice," continued the old hag, as she saw Chauncey glance around the room.

"You've done very well," replied Chauncey, laying the half-unconscious Elinor upon the bed. "This girl, however, needs attention, as does the baby there. Some hot drinks, I think, would be well enough, and—"

"Never mind that; Meg Tudor understands her business," interrupted the old woman, "an' she'll fix 'em all up in a few minutes."

"Then, while you are doing so, Blaisley and I will walk into the next room and settle a bit of private business."

"Very well. Jest make yourselves at home, gentlemen," said the old crone, as she hobbled about the room, preparing a drink for Elinor.

The two men withdrew to an adjoining apartment, which had neither carpet upon the floor, nor curtains on the windows, and was, indeed, all in all, a very cheerless, desolate-looking room.

"This is Meg's ante-room," said Blaisley, laughingly. "It ain't fitted up very like a royal habitation, and yet, the old witch claims to be one of the English Tudors."

"She's an old fool," replied Chauncey, leaning against the rude mantelpiece and looking into the fire.

"But she's handy," put in Blaisley, "devilish handy. Fact is, Cincinnati couldn't do very well without her, and you ought to be very much obliged to her for helping you in this scrape."

"Don't I pay her?" and Chauncey turned angrily upon his companion. "Besides, she is in possession of my secret, and I don't feel as safe as I'd like to, by a good deal."

"Well, now, I don't think you've any cause to fear," replied Blaisley, drawling his words. "Meg ain't all bad. She takes this girl, and nurses her, and gives her some precious good advice, and, maybe, by doing this, saves the gal's life."

"Blaisley, what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Yes, you do."

"Well, then, I mean that this here gal is an ugly thing on your hands. You are rich and respectable; she is poor, and may have been honest before you met her. It won't do to marry her anyhow, and Meg will save you from going to extremes, you see."

The two men looked into each other's face, and Chauncey would like to have been able to throttle his gigantic companion, but he was not able, and so he stifled his wrath as best he could, and simply said:

"Blaisley, here is your money," handing him a well-filled wallet; "and now we are quite—eh?"

"Until you need me again, I suppose."

"It's a bargain."

"Yes, it's a bargain."

The two men shook hands, and, just at that moment, Meg hobbled in.

"She's all right now, and so is the little one," she said, rubbing her yellow, wrinkled hands together. "They're sleeping in each other's arms, as nicely as a pair of pigeons."

"I'll not disturb them," said Chauncey. "Tell Elinor when she awakes, that I will be here to see her to-morrow night."

"Yes, sir, I'll tell her."

"Here is some money for you."

The yellow palm was outstretched in a minute, and the weak, reddish eyes were glittering with eager expectancy as she clutched the roll of money Chauncey gave to her.

"You must take good care of her."

"Yes, sir; you can depend upon me for that."

"Let her want for nothing. Remember, I'll pay for everything."

"That's the way I likes to hear men talk," croaked the hag. "Good-night, gentlemen."

The two men passed into the dark hall and were groping their way along, when old Meg appeared at the head of the stairs, holding her lamp over her gray head.

"You can see now?" she asked.

"Yes, thank ye, Meg," said Blaisley. "That will do."

The old woman bid the two men good-night once more, and then turned away to count the money she had just received.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LITTLE INVALID.

NIGHT was falling silently and dark upon the city when Van and Romney Taggart turned their steps homeward. They were very tired, and little Romney complained that his elbow ached.

"We've played so much to-day," replied Van, buttoning his patched coat under his chin; "but, then, we've done well, you see, and ma will be awful glad to see us."

"Yes," Romney returned; "but, oh, Van, I'm so cold. My feet got wet goin' on the boat."

Van was scarce two years older than his brother, but to have seen him stoop down and tie his handkerchief around Romney's throat, one would have supposed he was ten, at the very least.

"You ain't strong, Romney," he said, "and you know how ma tells ye never to get your feet wet."

"Yes, I know," was all Romney said; then the lads walked on again.

At the corner of Main street and the Public Landing Van halted, and said:

"I'll go in here, Romney, and buy ma something nice—tea and raisins."

"Well," and Romney sat down on the curbstone to await his brother's return. Presently he came back, laden down with packages.

"You'll have to carry my fiddle, Romney, I'm so loaded down," said Van, handing over his instrument.

Romney glanced at his brother's purchases, and said, in a dry, old-fashioned way:

"Got a good many things, didn't ye?"

"Yes; but we'll eat 'em all, soon enough."

Then the two children started on again, stopping at length before a row of grimy-looking tenements which faced the river, and which were then, and, we believe, still are, designated by the rather plebeian appellation of "RAT ROW."

Turning into one of these, the children ascended two flights of stairs, and then Romney rapped on the door with his fiddle. It was opened immediately by a tidy, handsome woman, who held in her hand a pair of half-made pantaloon, upon which she had evidently been at work.

"Ah! my boys," she said, throwing down her sewing, and kissing them; "how glad I am you've come. It's almost dark, and I was beginning to grow very uneasy."

"We've been all over," said Van; "made pretty well, too."

"You're the best of boys," she said, kissing them again. "Mamma would starve to death only for her little men."

"But, Romney, my child," she exclaimed, you look very pale and ill. What's the matter with you, dear?"

"Got my feet wet at the mail-boat," replied the boy, the tears gathering in his eyes.

"And you feel bad and sick, eh?" The woman's voice trembled as she spoke.

Little Romney hung down his head an instant and tried to speak, but, failing, he reached out his arms and folding them around the neck of his kneeling mother burst into tears.

"Oh, my precious!" she exclaimed, crying upon his head, while poor Van stood by the fire and cried, too.

Little Romney was very sick, and Mrs. Taggart bathed him well in mustard-water, and tucked him away in the blankets.

"You will be well to-morrow, my son," she said, "and if you are not, mamma will send for the doctor, and he will make you well."

"Can the doctor make me well?" asked Romney, opening his feverish eyes wide.

"Yes, my son."

"But, you said once—" He stopped.

"Well, what did I say?"

"That it was God who made us sick, and made us well too, when we would be good."

"Yes, I said so, darling," replied the poor mother; "and so He will. But, the doctor uses drugs and the knowledge God gave him to cure us when He don't want us to die."

"But, God wants us to die sometimes, don't He?" asked Romney.

"Yes, my son; when He wants us for heaven He calls us."

The little fellow paused, and looked up through tears into his mother's face.

"Do you think He wants me?" he asked, at length. "Now?"

"Oh, I hope not, my child! Your poor widowed mother and Van would be very lonely without you."

She could not speak more; her tears were choking her; and Van, who had crept up to the bedside, nestled close to her, and buried his tear-stained face in the bed-clothes.

The next morning, Romney Taggart was much worse—so bad, in fact, that his mother could do nothing but nurse him, and for the first time in his life, Van Taggart went out on the streets alone. But, he might just as well have remained at home. He could not sing; his heart was too heavy for that, and besides, Romney had been the alto, and he had never tried a solo before. He could not even play; he thought the violin sounded low and strange, and he was forever jumbling one tune with another. At noon, he gave up altogether, and went home without a penny!

"I couldn't do nothing without Romney," he said to his mother; and then they both cried the afternoon away.

CHAPTER IX.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

WHEN Elinor's absence was discovered, on the morning following her flight, there was considerable excitement at Walnut Grove. Mrs. Watterson called the household together promptly, and said: "The poor creature, doubtless ashamed of herself, had risked her life by running off in the night-time. Now that she has gone, however, let her coming, as well as her stay here, never be mentioned by any of you. If I ever hear this disagreeable subject alluded to in this house, I will be very angry with the offending person."

It sounded very much like a prepared declamation, but all the servants promised silence and the affair was over.

That same afternoon, Lucy Watterson returned from school. She was a slight, pretty girl, simple enough to look at, but keen and shrewd withal.

She had scarce been half an hour at the Grove, when Chauncey invited her out for a stroll.

"This is very brotherly, Chauncey, I must confess," she said, laughingly; "and if you were not my brother I would imagine you were up for a flirtation."

He smiled, and said in answer:

"You are full of rollicking sunshine, Lucy. But, I want to tell you something."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed!"

"A regular secret?" Her face was all dimples.

"Yes, a regular secret. Can you keep one?"

"Well, I'm not sure of that. You know what Fletcher says about women keeping secrets."

"Now, Lucy, I don't want any of your school-girl antics, nor, for that matter, any of your school-girl quotations either." He spoke imperiously, and Lucy looked and saw the tempest was gathering.

"What, what?" she exclaimed. "You are not going to quarrel with me already, are you?"

"No, Lucy," he answered, coloring crimson; "but you girls have such a fashion of cutting up foolish pranks just at the time a man wants to talk sense."

"Then you are angry."

"No, I'm not."

"Then, come; where shall we go?"

"Let us take this path, down to the creek."

They walked along in the bright afternoon sunshine, her bright blue chintz robe fluttering in the wind, and her brownish hair, which rippled down upon her shoulders all a-glitter, like waves of dancing gold.

When they had reached a retired spot, where they could see the creek flashing in the sunlight, and hear the soft music of its flow, they sat down upon the trunk of a fallen tree, and Lucy said:

"Now, my affectionate brother, your amiable sister is all attention."

He did not speak for an instant; then he said, rather abruptly:

"Lucy, I have a notion to get married."

She raised her brown eyes quickly to her brother's face, and, after a glance at its solemn aspect, said:

"Well, and who is to be the lucky one—eh?"

"Can't you guess?" he said.

"Guess? Well, maybe I can. Let me see: Elinor Gregg, I suppose?"

Had some strong man dashed his fist full in Chauncey Watter's face, he would not have started more suddenly, nor would he have been more excited than he was at the mention of that girl's name. Lucy noticed this, too, and when he said: "How preposterous!" and curled his lips, scornfully, she could not, for the life of her, understand the meaning of his words and conduct.

"Why is it preposterous?" she demanded.

"Elinor Gregg is a nice, handsome girl, and—"

"Lucy, you don't know what you are talking about," he interrupted. "The girl's a beggar!"

"Oh, no, she is not a beggar, Chauncey! 'Tis true, she is only a poor farmer's daughter; but, she is an accomplished girl—in fact, stood head and shoulders over every girl at Pleasant Grove."

"That may be true enough, but my wife

must be of good family. Lucy, you wouldn't have me marry a nobody, would you?"

"You seemed very attentive to her the three months you spent at Xenia," replied Lucy; "and if you thought her so very much inferior to you, why then, you ought not to have visited her at all."

"You have a tongue of your own, my little sister," he said, sharply, and then, changing his tone and manner, and smiling as he spoke, he said: "Why should we quarrel about this girl; I will confess that I was smitten by her charms, and only that I subsequently discovered how unworthy she was of an honest man's love and admiration, I believe I would have married her."

"Unworthy!" repeated Lucy. "Elinor Gregg unworthy? There must surely be some mistake here."

"I wish there was," he replied. "Over a year ago, I discovered that, on her leaving school, she formed the acquaintance of a rough farmer, who did not bear the best sort of a character, and, night before last, Rand and I found her almost opposite the Mill Creek House, lying in the mud."

Lucy Watterson clasped her hands in utter astonishment, and looked her brother searchingly in the eyes, as he proceeded:

"While Rand carried her here, I went for a doctor; and it was not until I returned that I knew the wanderer was Elinor Gregg."

"Go on," said Lucy, almost breathless.

"Where is she now?"

"That I cannot tell you. The night she came here she gave birth to a child, and the next night she fled the house."

"Since which time—"

"Since which time she has neither been seen nor heard from by any person connected with our house."

"Did she leave no clue—no trace?"

"None whatever."

"And the baby?"

"She took with her."

"This sounds like a romance," said Lucy.

"Poor Elinor Gregg, and I always thought she was such a nice girl."

"So did I," replied Chauncey. "I would have almost staked my life on her honesty. But, you see, it is hard to judge some people."

"Very hard," said Lucy, with her eyes fixed upon the ground; "but did mamma know that Elinor was your old favorite?"

"No; I thought it best not to tell her. You know mother is so queer, and she might think that, possibly, I had something to do with Elinor's sin."

"And you mean to keep this a secret?"

"Yes."

"Well, I presume you are right," said Lucy, after a pause; "but, Chauncey, who are you going to marry?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Oh, I'm tired guessing! Please tell me."

"Then I will not tax your patience further. The young lady is named Grace Alward."

"Grace Alward! Pretty, charming Grace Alward!"

Lucy was all enthusiasm now. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, and she clapped her hands in rapture.

"Yes, Grace," repeated Chauncey; "and I'm very glad my little sister thinks so highly of her brother's intended wife."

"I'm perfectly delighted with the idea of having Grace for a sister. Besides, Chauncey, I think marriage will settle you down some," replied Lucy; "and you know you have been a little wild."

"I confess you I have been a trifle wild—but not more so than most young men of my age, and I am quite ready and willing to put on the matrimonial manacles at the earliest possible moment."

"And when is the wedding to take place?" questioned Lucy. "I hope it will be soon, for I can't bear waiting."

"In September some time; the precise day has not been fixed," was the answer.

"Why, Chauncey, that is eight mortal weeks yet!"

"And what are eight weeks? A mere pigment of time."

There was a light, bounding footfall upon the grass behind them; then a rippling, silvery girlish laugh, and then Grace Alward placed a hand upon Lucy Watterson's shoulder.

"Welcome, school-girl! When did you escape from the dormitory?"

The two girls greeted each other warmly, just as girls would do; for an instant were folded in each other's arms, just as girls would be; then the trio started for the house again.

"How did you know we were here?" asked Chauncey.

"Your mother told me, and so I ran away from ma to find you."

"You will stay at the Grove all night, then," said Lucy, entreatingly. "It will be too late to go home after tea; besides, I want to talk to you. I have a fund of information for you."

Yes, Grace would remain, and ere the two girls went to sleep that night, they had talked over the past and present, and dreamed of the bright future that was to dawn for both.

CHAPTER X.

OUT IN THE WORLD.

DURING the first fortnight of Elinor Gregg's residence in the old house by the river, Chauncey Watterson visited her every day; or, rather every evening, for he was too well known in the city to make his visits to such a question-

able locality publicly and in daylight. He was very tender and kind to Elinor, and there was a sort of considerate deference he always paid to her, which would have pleased some women so much that they would never have asked for anything more. But not so with Elinor Gregg. Morning, noon and night her mind was occupied with dismal thoughts of her deadful position, and Chauncey never visited her that she did not question him concerning their prospective marriage.

"You cannot know, Chauncey, what terrible thoughts come to me sometimes," she said one night, sitting by the fire, propped up with pillows, and looking very pale and pretty.

He had one arm on the mantel, and was gazing into the fire in a dreamy, abstracted way when she spoke, but her words were so solemn, and there had been such a death-like silence before, that he started and colored slightly.

"Well, that's all your own fault," he said.

"My fault!" She bit her nether lip, and looked up, astonished, as the exclamation escaped her.

"Yes, your own fault," he reiterated.

"Have I not tried to make you as comfortable as possible—have you expressed a desire that I have not granted at once—have you asked for anything money could purchase that I have not bought for you? Elinor, I think you are treating me unkindly—positively unkindly."

She did not reply at once; she was amazed—so much amazed, indeed, that she could not do anything but stare up at that man, whose brow was like a thunder-storm now, and whose eyes glittered with the light of a terrible menace.

"Well, why don't you speak?" he asked, at length. "You sit there and stare at one as if you had lost your wits."

Her dark eyes grew luminous, and her scarlet lips became almost as pale as her cheeks. "I have lost my wits," she said, at length, pausing to catch her breath between each word, "and I have lost that which is worse than reason—my faith in you."

He shrugged his shoulders and scowled again.

"You must not try to frighten me with ugly looks," she continued. "I have passed the point where scowling affrights; I stand upon the brink of a horrible abyss; I feel the rock on which I stand—and which I once thought so firm—crumbling into sand beneath my feet; then why should I fear the glance of an eye, or the curl of a lip? Chauncey Watterson, I believe I'm growing mad."

"So do I," he said. "You talk like a fool."

"I have up to this time acted like one," she replied, "but from this hour I shall be wise."

"Indeed!" he said; "wisdom is always welcome."

"Yes, but my wisdom came too late, I fear Chauncey Watterson, I wish to ask you one simple question."

"Go on; but, pray you, let it not be too simple."

"This is no time for levity, sir," she exclaimed, fiercely. "Do you intend to marry me, and give to that innocent child sleeping there a name?"

He glanced over at the bed where the little rosy stranger slept, and then said: "To be candid with you, Elinor, I think we had better come to an understanding at once. You are a poor girl, and, had I not met you, would doubtless have married a coarse, vulgar countryman, and settled meekly down to the drudgery of farm work. You are too handsome, too polished, too intelligent, to appreciate such an existence, and you will one day bless me for saving you from such social slavery as would unquestionably have been your lot."

She riveted her eyes upon him as he spoke, and pressed her hand to her heart to still its wild beatings. "Go on," she said, when he paused; "go on!"

"I have determined to do the clever thing by you," he said, folding his hands behind his back, and speaking in a matter-of-fact way that chilled Elinor Gregg through and through. "I will send you and your child abroad; I will have you educated either as an artist or an actress, whichever profession you find most congenial and best calculated to give the greatest scope to your talents. You shall never want for money; I will settle one thousand dollars a year upon you."

Elinor was very weak, but she stood up now, erect and rigid as marble, and her graceful, rounded figure, draped in flowing muslin, looked very classic and beautiful, even to that man who had grown tired of her. She tried to speak, but something hard in her throat was suffocating her. Staggering to the window, she threw up the sash, and the moonlight fell upon her like a mellow flood, making her look whiter, more *spirituelle* than before.

The man was frightened. He thought she was about to leap from the window, and, starting forward, he caught her by the wrist.

She shook his hand off, and, lifting herself until she appeared about two inches taller than she actually was, she said, with more bitterness in her voice than can be described:

"You are very kind, sir—very, very kind; but I would not accept a cent from you, no—not to save my soul from the horrors of eternity. I am not so low as to sell myself, whatever I have done, because I loved you once."

"Oh, come; be reasonable; talk sense," he said.

"Well, then, I'll talk sense," was the reply. "From this night, Chauncey Watterson, we are mortal foes. You are a base scoundrel, who took advantage of a poor, unsophisticated girl, and ruined her brightest prospects to satisfy your taste for conquest, I presume. But your victory will only be a transient one; the time

will come, Chauncey Watterson, when you will beg me to forgive you."

"This is idle raving," he interrupted, "both unbecoming and inopportune."

"And you are the man to judge of what is becoming!" She was sneering at him now—"you, who live only to deceive and blight. But, remember—"

"Bosh!" he exclaimed; "you act like a she-dragon. I did not come here to be bullied in this way, and I beg of you to restrain your temper for an instant and I'll leave the house. You can then rant at will. Old Meg, I suppose, has a taste for high tragedy and boisterous declamation. Thank Heaven, I have not."

He took his hat and overcoat from the table as he spoke, and walked to the door. "Good-by. I'll come and see you again when you're in a better humor."

"You will never see me here again," replied Elinor.

"As you wish," he answered, and was gone.

She stood still, her hair floating down her snowy gown, and her eyes, dark and brilliant, fixed upon the spot where Chauncey Watterson had stood.

"No," she muttered; "you will never see me again here. Perhaps you will never see me again, anywhere." Then she thought of how she had loved him; how kind and sweet he once was; and, bursting into tears, she fell upon her knees, exclaiming: "Oh, that this should be the ending of all—that this should be the ending! Oh, that I could wash away the past with those tears," she said, finally, rising to her feet; "but I can't do that—the stain is indelible."

She sat down by the fire for a long time, and sobbed and muttered to herself. Then she got up and looked out into the night again.

She knew it was very late; the moon was sinking behind the Kentucky hills in a brownish mist, and no sound could be heard save the flow of the dark, blackish river. Covington was gloomy and silent. Newport was hid away in the haze.

Whatever Elinor Gregg was thinking about she did not speak for fully ten minutes; then, with lips compressed and a sudden resolve in her face, she approached the bedside. The infant she thought sleeping was trying to cram its fists into a perfect rosebud of a mouth, and as she leaned over it, it reached up its hands as if it knew her, and smiled sweetly.

Elinor's face flushed; her lips relaxed their rigidity, and she nestled her face close to the baby's, and sobbed once more.

"Poor, poor baby!" she exclaimed. "God help you, and God help me."

The baby cried now, and Elinor picked it up and nursed it by the fire until its blue eyes—so like Chauncey's—closed again.

Then she arose, wrapped it carefully in a soft satin wrap; placed around its neck a locket set

with emeralds, and bare-headed as she was, started down the stairs. They creaked under her, although she walked ever so lightly, and she could hear old Meg turning uneasily on her bed down-stairs.

Pausing an instant only, she stole, like a shadow of fear, down the carpetless hall, softly unbarred the door, and stepped out into the moonlight. Once she glanced toward the river; then she hurried on up Front.

The streets were entirely deserted; not even a policeman was visible, and the tall black warehouses looked down upon the refugees like grim monster giants dumb under the spell of some hideous gnome.

At length she approached "Rat Row." It was dark, too, save in one of the upper stories, where a light flickered and threw a feeble ray into the street.

Elinor stopped and gazed upward. A woman, with a sweet, sympathetic face, came to the window and threw out a bottle of drugs.

"I wonder what's wrong up there," thought Elinor. "Somebody sick, I suppose."

The supposition was quite natural, for it was three o'clock in the morning.

"Well," she muttered, half aloud, "if they don't take care of her, they will give her to some one who will."

Saying this, she walked firmly across the street; pushed open the battered hall-door; crept up ever so many flights of dirty stairs until she saw a beam of light stealing from under a door; then she kissed her burden passionately, laid it gently down, and, cat-like, groped her way back to the street.

Two men came along just then, talking about fast steamboats. To escape these she shrunk into a doorway, and then turned the first corner and ran headlong toward the broad river.

CHAPTER XI.

DYING.

LITTLE ROMNEY TAGGART was very sick, and every day he became worse, until, at last, the old doctor, who was supposed to know a wonderful sight more than he really did, shook his head sadly, and said, not at all in a professional, but in a very feeling way:

"Poor boy, there is no hope."

Yes, that was the sentence, and it was the verdict, too, that wretched Sarah Taggart had been waiting for so long. But, when it came, it almost stunned her to the verge of insensibility; and when little manly Van came home that evening, with his fiddle and pence, his mother called him out on the landing, and said:

"Van, my poor boy, we will soon be all alone in the world."

The child looked up, and while his lips trembled, he asked:

"Is—is Romney dying, ma?"

"Yes, Van, Romney is going. The doctor told me so to day."

"Then he won't get well at all?" His eyes were swimming in tears as he put the query, and when his mother did not answer, but cried very hard instead, he knelt down by her side and tried to comfort her. Failing in this, he cried, too; and when they both went back to the sick-room, which they did a few moments after, their eyes were red and their hearts heavy with the weight of unshed tears.

Little Romney was awake, and he noticed the redness of Van's face at once.

"What ails you, Van?" he asked. "Did anybody hit you?"

"No, Rom.; I just felt bad, an' I couldn't help but cry."

The wee invalid's face was sharp and pointed, and his eyes and wits seemed to have been sharpened, too, by the fell hand of disease, for he said, promptly:

"You're cryin' 'bout me, Van. I know you is."

Van only buried his face deeper in the bed-clothes, and Romney, taking this for an admission, continued:

"You mustn't cry for me, Van. You can get another, stronger boy to go with you. I allers was a sort of drawback, you know, anyway."

"I don't want no other boy—so I don't," exclaimed Van, fiercely; "an' I ain't goin' to have no other."

"One boy never can make nice music," said Romney, after a pause, "an' if I was you, Van, I'd get another boy."

"Don't talk that way, Romney, darling," said Mrs. Taggart, trying to conceal her emotion. "Don't you see you are making your poor little brother cry."

"Well, I won't talk any more, ma," answered Romney, closing his eyes wearily, and laying one little wasted hand caressingly on his brother's head.

Neither Van nor his mother slept that night. The invalid was restless, and only closed his eyes for a few moments at a time, and was always wide awake when the hour for taking his medicine came about. Toward the close of the next day, he began to sink rapidly; his face assumed a pinched appearance; his nose becoming very sharp and pointed, indeed; and he could not sit up, even in his mother's arms, for a longer period than five minutes.

Strange enough, he was eager to talk, although every word that passed his lips cost him considerable effort, and pained him some, too. His mother saw this, and she said, gently:

"Romney, darling, you are talking too much."

He opened his large, bright eyes wide, and looked up into her face before he spoke. Then he said, in a grave, quiet way:

"It hurts me to talk, but I want to say so many things to you and Van, because, you know—"

He stopped suddenly, and turned his gaze yearningly upon his brother, sitting at the foot of the bed.

"Because what?" questioned Mrs. Taggart.

"Because I won't be here to-morrow night to talk with you, an' I—I—I—"

"Oh, yes, you will be here to-morrow night, my son, and many a night after to-morrow. You don't know what you are speaking about."

"Yes, I do know," he said. "I know I can't see you as well as I did awhile ago; and I feel so very weak, and tired-like, and I know I'm goin' to rest soon, for a very—very long while."

His voice died away into a whisper, and he motioned his mother to lift him up off the bed.

She did so; holding his head against her heart, and devouring his face with her eyes.

"My little man," she said, "look up. Don't you know me—don't you know your poor mamma?"

His lips moved, and his eyes grew so large that they seemed about to leap from their sockets, and, after a moment's silence, he managed to say, very faintly:

"Yes, you're my ma."

She kissed the parched lips, and exclaimed:

"Yes, indeed, I'm your ma, my precious! I'm your ma!"

"Van! Van!" came like a distant echo from little Romney's lips, and he stretched out his hand. It was grasped by his brother. The invalid was still a moment. Then he seemed to grow stronger, both in body and voice, and he said:

"Let me down, ma; and you, Van, play something on my fiddle."

Mrs. Taggart laid the sick boy among the pillows, and poor, tearful Van sat close by the bedside and played an old, plaintive air, that occasionally sounded very much like a wail, until his mother startled him by crying out:

"Oh, Van! Van! Your poor little brother is dying."

She spoke the truth. As the mournful strain ceased, so did the brief life-journey of little Romney Taggart end.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FOUNDLING OF RAT ROW.

ROMNEY TAGGART was buried next day at Spring Grove. They made his grave in a part of the cemetery where the lots were cheap, and where there were more unkept graves than monuments.

Mrs. Taggart would like to have had the body interred on the summit of a little knoll close to the chapel, but such lots were very ex-

pensive at Spring Grove, and so she had to content herself with the spot her slender means could purchase.

"It 'll be a nice 'nuff place one of these days," said the old sexton, "when the new walks are laid out; an' if yer don't think a dollar too dear, I wouldn't min' planting some sprigs of flowers there?"

No, she did not think it dear at all, and the money was paid promptly. The next day there was a coating of emerald turf on Romney's grave, and a little rosebush served the double purpose of a distinguishing mark and an ornament.

Van Taggart and his poor, heart-sick mother felt very lonely when they sat down that evening to their cheerless supper. They had often eat their meals alone during little Romney's illness, but they had never felt his absence until now, and when Mrs. Taggart noticed that through sheer force of habit she had placed three plates on the table, and that Van was looking at the third one with tears in his eyes, she never said a word, but slyly slipped it away again and bent over the black cooking-stove a long while.

After they had swallowed a few mouthfuls, Mrs. Taggart broke the silence by remarking what a nice place Mill Creek Valley was, and Van, seeming to know that his mother was striving to keep from a painful subject, answered that it was a very beautiful place; then each stared into the face of the other, and Mrs. Taggart finally covered hers with her hands and fell to weeping. One might have supposed from what had been said that she was crying about the beauty of Mill Creek Valley; but she was not, and Van knew she was crying because there was no need of a third plate, and, in all, likelihood, never would be again.

She sat by the fire and wept for many weary hours, and finally Van crept over and laid his curly head in his mother's lap and slept uneasily, for a long time.

When the city clocks tolled three Mrs. Taggart awoke the boy and bid him prepare for bed.

While he was praying in one corner, she proceeded to clear away the pile of drugs on the table, throwing some of them out of the window, and putting some carefully away in a small closet.

"Kiss me, ma," said Van, rising from his knees.

She stooped down, kissed him tenderly, and was about to kneel down herself, when a faint cry, like that of an infant, startled her.

"What is that?" she asked, looking at Van, and trembling visibly. She was a very timid woman.

"I don't know," replied the boy; "it sounds like a baby, don't it?"

"Very like," was the response; "but it's at our door."

"I'll go and look," he said; and he did.

In an instant he returned with Elinor Gregg's child in his arms.

"Oh, see," he exclaimed, "God has sent us this baby in place of our little Romney."

It was a beautiful baby—fat, rosy, and with large, wondering blue eyes, and Sarah Taggart clasped it in her arms and kissed its velvet cheek a dozen times before she spoke.

"Shall we keep it, mamma?" asked Van, after a while.

"No, dear, it would be too much trouble and we have not the means," she replied.

"But I will work for it; so hard," pleaded Van, "and when I come home I'll mind it all the time—so I will."

She could not resist that appeal, and there was, too, a void in her heart that this little waif could help to fill, she thought.

"What is its name, I wonder?" said Mrs. Taggart, after examining the emerald necklace carefully. "I can see no name on any thing."

She had scarcely uttered these words when her thumb pressing against the largest stone, touched a spring, and the great jewel divided in equal halves, revealing a beautiful, girlish face in miniature, and engraved beneath it, the single word, "Elinor."

"Elinor! ain't it, ma?" said Van, after spelling slowly the inscription.

"Yes, that's its mother's name, I suppose."

"But we won't call it Elinor, will we, ma?"

"Why not?"

"Well, because it is too big and proud a name for a little baby. Don't you think so?"

"Yes;" Mrs. Taggart thought so; "but, what will we call it?"

Van paused and looked at the ceiling an instant; then his face lighted up, and he said:

"Let's call it Romney, ma. Oh, let's call it Romney."

"But it's a girl, my boy! and it wouldn't do to call a girl Romney. At least it wouldn't sound well, I think."

Van thought it would make no difference; and seemed so very much disappointed that his kind mother finally said: "Well, Van, you can have your own way in this. She is your own *protege*, and you may call her what you please."

"Then I will call her Romney Taggart," he said, kissing the wee scarlet mouth in an exceedingly awkward, boyish way.

The little stranger did not relish the caress, for she drew down her brow until her face was a mere mass of purple wrinkles, in one of which her eyes were completely hid, and fell to crying like a vixen.

"Did I hurt her, ma?" asked the boy, a trifle vexed.

"No, my son, but little baby girls are very tender, I suppose."

"More'n boys?"

"A great deal more, I think."

Van Taggart remembered that for a long time, and during the first two years of Miss Romney Taggart's life he was very cautious when taking her on his knee that she was not hurt through his rudeness. Miss Romney had a very tender nurse, indeed.

CHAPTER XIII

REMORSE.

CHAUNCEY WATTERSON was very much distressed when he learned of Elinor's sudden disappearance, and this distress was heightened a fortnight after when he read in the newspapers that a woman answering Elinor's description in every particular had been found floating in the Ohio, below North Bend. The body had been taken to Lawrenceburg for interment, but the news reaching the ears of poor old Adam Gregg, he had the remains of his daughter taken to Butler county, and placed in the village graveyard, close beside the church in which Elinor Gregg had often worshiped when a child.

Chauncey Watterson was not wholly bad. He had been educated in a wicked school, and his training slimed his natural good traits with a coating of false philosophy and worldliness, but, beneath this slime, there was a man's heart—a little willful and stubborn, but tender, too.

The knowledge that he had driven Elinor Gregg to suicide preyed upon his mind night and day. He could not think of any thing else for weeks and months, and some of his friends twitted him on becoming melancholy because of his approaching marriage with Grace Alward.

Even the latter noticed how gloomy and abstracted he was growing, and one day, when they were alone in the sumptuous reception-room of the Alward mansion, she said:

"Chauncey, I fear you are not going to make a good husband at all."

He looked up, astonished, and asked:

"Why, Grace?"

She pouted, as spoiled beauties are apt to do when men vex them, and said:

"Well, you are so gloomy at times, and I believe these times are increasing and last longer than they used to do. With our wedding day so near at hand, we should have more smiles."

"I will try to please you in that," he replied, pulling a rose-bud to pieces, "but I have had some business troubles, and I can not control my uneasiness at all times."

"Then tell me the cause of your trouble," she said, with a pretty, girlish animation, "and I will either dissipate it altogether or help you to bear it."

He then shook his head and answered: "No, it is bad enough for me to suffer, but you shall not."

A very sober light came into her face, and

her eyes, which had been full of sunshine an instant before, now sought the carpet, full of shadows.

"You are not angry, Grace?" he asked, pleadingly.

"Yes, I am," she replied, hiding her face with the end of her scarf.

"And why are you angry?"

"Because you don't consider me fit to become your wife."

"But I do," he said, surprised.

"Well, then, why don't you tell me what troubles you so? I'm sure I could keep your secret, and if you think I could not, or that it would be dangerous to intrust me with it, why, then, I'm not the woman you should marry."

This was spoken in a grave, serious tone—a tone that surprised Chauncey Watterson a good deal, and for the first time in his life he realized that Grace Alward was not merely a bright, silly, pleasant girl whom he could deceive very easily and on whom reason would be wasted.

He saw, now, that he would have to employ different tactics, and so he said:

"Gracie, my own, you are right, and I will tell you everything."

Her face lighted up again, and she put up her lips, and he kissed them.

"You see I have been very wild," he began, "and have done a good many things which you would think doubtless very bad."

"But you won't do so any more—will you?" she interrupted.

"God helping me, I hope not," he replied, solemnly; "but I have spent a great deal of money and am in debt some."

"I will lend you money to pay," she said, eagerly.

He put up his hand.

"Oh, no, Grace, I'm not so bad as that. I have plenty to pay my debts, and a slight margin of sixty or seventy thousand left."

They talked a long while, and when they parted it was with the understanding that their marriage should be postponed until December in order to permit him to arrange all his affairs with a view to a lengthy absence in Europe.

Chauncey had now five months of a respite in which to ponder over his great crime, and nurse the arrow of remorse which rankled in his breast.

"Had I my life to live over again," he frequently exclaimed to himself, "Elinor Gregg would now be my wife instead of sleeping in the dishonored grave of a suicide."

But these regrets were vain, and keenly he felt this to be true. But his remorse made him sentimental, and one day, late in October, he wandered into the Dellville graveyard.

The trees were weeping tears of blood upon the long, faded and tangled grass, which almost obscured the graves, and the setting sun was

turning the dew that hung upon the flowers into purest sparkling crystalline.

Two boys, playing hide and seek among the tombstones, stopped their play as they saw the moody man stalk by, and when he sat down and looked curiously about him, they gave up their frolic, and stole away to their homes.

The old sexton, however, coming out of the church, noticed the stranger, and bowed politely to him.

"Can you tell me where Elinor Gregg is buried?" asked Chauncey.

The old man took off his hat, produced a red bandana, and after wiping his purple forehead, said, very deliberately:

"Yes, sir, I can show you the spot."

"Would you be kind enough to do so?"

The sexton eyed Chauncey from underneath his shaggy eyebrows an instant, and said:

"Yes, sir, I'll do that—and gladly, too, 'cause Elinor, poor girl, was good at heart, though somewhat unfortunate. But, sir, this is a world of deceit and wickedness, and none of us as is raising children know what will become of them before they die yet."

Chauncey agreed with the old man, and, in reply to one of his questions, said:

"No, I'm no relative. I knew her once—a long while ago."

"This is the place, then," said the sexton, pausing before a little mound over which the grass grew very green.

"Why, there is no tombstone!" exclaimed Chauncey, after a silent survey.

"No," replied the sexton. "Adam Gregg was at a good penny of expense to bring her all the way from Lawrenceburg, and he couldn't afford a tombstone just yet, I guess."

"You can leave me here. I'll remain awhile," said Chauncey, seating himself on a flat tombstone close by Elinor Gregg's grave.

The sexton obeyed, and when he had disappeared from sight, the young man fell upon the small grave and wept like a child—wept for poor Elinor Gregg—for her child and his, which he thought was lying stark and dead in the big river—and wept for himself, too, whose evil deeds were now bearing Dead Sea fruit, full of gall-like bitterness.

The sun settled down into billows of golden splendor, and the moon arose, pale, bright and radiant, and still Chauncey Watterson knelt in the wet grass.

He felt very weak and dizzy when he stood up at last, and said to the senseless sod which covered Elinor Gregg, "Farewell, forever!"

He staggered like a drunken man from the spot, and three weeks after, to the surprise of everybody, a tall, stately marble monument lifted its form from out the grass of Elinor's grave, and on a tablet in the center the sexton shaded his eyes and read:

"SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
ELINOR GREGG,
Aged 19 years."

CHAPTER XIV.

A WEDDING AND A SCARE.

THE Alward mansion was brilliantly illuminated, and the large parlors and reception-rooms were thronged with guests invited to participate in the wedding ceremony and festivities which were to celebrate the marriage of Grace Alward to Mr. Chauncey Watterson.

They were not to be married at home, but at St. Peter's Episcopal chapel, to which a number of persons, for whom there was no room at Grace's house, were invited. Before eight o'clock the chapel was crowded, and everybody was on the tiptoe of expectancy.

At last the wedding-march was pealed forth by the grand-voiced organ, and then all eyes were directed toward the doors which opened into the vestibule.

A moment more, and they were flung back by the kidded and perfumed sexton, and in came Lucy Watterson, who was the bridesmaid of the occasion, leaning on the arm of Robert Alward, Grace's only cousin, while close behind, looking exceedingly handsome, came Chauncey Watterson, and clinging to his arm, the litho, fairy-like form of Grace.

Every person thought the happy pair handsome, and every eye followed them as they swept up the middle aisle to the chancel railing where the white-haired minister stood.

So engaged was the attention of the vast audience, that no one noticed the dark figure which stole into the chapel immediately after them, and sat quietly down within the sound of the minister's calm, even voice.

The marriage service of the Episcopal church, so solemn, so impressive, so elaborate, occupied almost twenty minutes, and the twain were declared man and wife. The old minister knew the bride very intimately, and instead of dismissing the assemblage at once, he proceeded to admonish the young couple to remember the vows they had just registered; to lead an honest, pure life; to bear with each other's failings kindly, and, if God should please to bless their union with children, to see to it that they were raised within the pale of the church.

Saying this, he prayed God to bless them both, and then followed the two surpliced acolytes into the vestry.

The bridal party stopped to receive many congratulations; and then, a little tired and worried with excitement, walked down the aisle toward the door.

Just as they reached the vestibule the dark figure stood directly in their path, her face concealed by the folds of a black mourning veil.

Chauncey put out his hand and touched her on the shoulder.

"Please stand aside," he said.

She lifted up the veil and glared into his eyes.

He started wildly back; it was the face of the dead—it was the face of Elinor Gregg! Before he could speak, she disappeared in the snow-drifts which covered the streets, and he, uttering a faint scream, fainted and fell all in a heap, at the feet of his new-made wife.

A scene of wild confusion followed; Grace, of all the party, recognized the true cause of her husband's illness, and this possibly nerved her to bend over him, and whisper:

"Don't fear, Chauncey dearest; that bad woman is gone."

"Gone! gone!" he muttered, staring wildly up into Grace's face, and then cowering back the next instant as he met her honest gaze, like a moral coward as he was.

"Why, what is wrong?" asked Lucy, excitedly, bending over her brother.

"Nothing," answered Grace, with rare presence of mind; "nothing—only a slight attack of epilepsy."

She said this loud enough for every one to hear distinctly, and soon a dozen tongues were repeating her words to a hundred pairs of ears.

Leaning on Robert Alward's shoulder, Chauncey Watterson managed to reach the carriage, and by the time they reached the Alward mansion he was wholly recovered from the shock he had received; although, during the entire evening, he was excited and nervous—so much so, indeed, that Grace advised him to the utmost quiet.

It looked very strange to see a broad-shouldered, robust man like Chauncey trembling like a school-girl, and it was only Grace Watterson's pride that kept her from crying through sheer mortification.

Of course Chauncey's illness was noised abroad among the guests, and some disappointed girls shrugged their shoulders and laughed slyly; while dowagers, with marriageable daughters, thought a man subject to fits would never be able to make much of a show in the world, and were really glad to have their Sophia's and Maria's still on hand.

But Chauncey, amid all this gossip and hypocrisy, was suffering keenly. The woman whom he had supposed sleeping under six feet of earth, in Dellville graveyard, had stood before him and glared into his eyes like a horrid specter in the first few moments of his married life—there, amid the laughing throng where a spirit, good or evil, would never have shown itself at all. Sometimes he almost convinced himself that it was the shade of Elinor; then he would be willing to testify it was her in the flesh, and anon he would drive away all these by stiffly asserting that it was some person

whom his fancy at that moment clothed with the features of the dead. This appeared altogether the most reasonable solution of the mystery, and before the carriage whisked them off to the midnight train which was to bear them to St. Louis, he had quite satisfied himself that this was really the case.

At St. Louis the twain left the rail, and going aboard a magnificent Western steamboat, bound for St. Paul, settled down to enjoy the sweets of love and travel.

Chauncey Watterson did not love his young wife with that fierce, devouring passion which he had given to Elinor Gregg; but if there was less of the impetuous element in the affection he gave to Grace, there was more respect, and possibly greater depth, too.

Grace was so different from Elinor. While the latter was regal, queenly, proud, the former was graceful, supple, yielding—all ripple and sunshine, and she tried so hard to make her husband happy, that there was scarce an hour in which he did not bless her for some little deed of self-sacrifice which was intended to enhance his pleasure. Like a true woman she refrained from mentioning the affair at the chapel door, but Chauncey felt her silence on the subject was building some sort of a barrier between them, and he longed to talk the matter over and explain the circumstance satisfactorily to her.

Although it was rapidly approaching Christmas, and there had already been some wintry weather, the sun shone warmly throughout all the day, and at night the moon looked down at its bright, round face in the clear, rolling tide of the Upper Mississippi.

Chauncey and Grace spent many hours in the pilot-house—a favorite resort for tourists on Western waters—and, one night, when there were none but themselves and the old bronzed pilot there, the latter turned to them and said:

“Do ye see those lights thar’ ahead?”

“Yes, very distinctly,” replied Chauncey.

“Well, that thar’ is Keokuk; the first town in Iowa on the river after ye leave Missouri ahind.”

The young couple looked forward between the two black smoke-stacks and Grace said, after a moment:

“Why, pilot, those lights appear a great deal higher than this boat.”

“Yes, I should say so,” was the response; “that ’ere town is built on a side of a mighty high hill.”

“Are you going to land there?” asked Chauncey.

“No, siree! We have to git over the rapids afore we stop. Fraps yer see a few lights over thar’ on the other side of the river?”

“Very distinctly,” replied Chauncey. “Is that another town?”

“Wal, that was a town onc’t, but it’s on’y a ruins now, and mebbe that thar’s the on’y ruins of a town in this country.”

“Indeed! What was its name?” asked Grace, her curiosity excited.

“Wal, ma’am, that thar’ is Nauvoo—the fu’st home of the Mormons in America, and the burial place of thar’ prophet. I guess you’ve he’rn toll of Joe Smith, ma’am?”

“Yes, I’ve heard tell of him,” replied Grace; while Chauncey looked moodily out at the two lights which flickered where once stood a large city—the Bethlehem of a new theology.

“Wal, ma’am, I don’t know what you may think of the people as they call Mormons. They may be plaguey sight worse than yer Christian folks, but I think their massacre in cold blood was not a very Christian act, anyways.”

“No; I think it was not right to shoot Smith in jail,” said Grace, after awhile; “but then, you see, pilot, it wouldn’t do for them to get leave to set up such a doctrine here—it would overturn society.”

“Better to overturn society, ma’am, if society can’t stand against wickedness; but, ma’am, you’ll pardon me when I say that I don’t think it’s greater harm to have two wives than it is to have one wife and another woman, as ought to be a wife, too.”

Chauncey Watterson felt his blood rushing in a hot tide to his face, and Grace, who had one hand resting gently on his arm, felt him tremble like an aspen. She did not speak, however, for a moment, and then she merely said:

“It’s getting chilly up here, Chauncey; let us go down to the cabin.”

They bid the pilot “good-night,” and stepped out of the cozy glass house into the chill air and clear moonlight.

When they had reached the hurricane-deck, Chauncey stopped, and said:

“Grace, you never asked me concerning the woman who shocked me at the chapel door; why have you kept silent about that?”

“I expected you to tell me,” she answered, promptly, “but your reticence led me to suppose you did not wish the matter discussed.”

“And so you avoided it—eh?”

“Yes.”

“That was very kind—very good in you, Grace; but, you have a right to know, and I’m going to tell you.”

He said this with a great show of honesty and earnestness, and Grace clung closer to him, and replied:

“You are a good, kind husband, and I’ll repay your confidence by discretion and silence, if you desire it.”

“Well, then,” he began, “I led a fast life prior to our courtship, and, like many young men of means, I became intimate with a woman whose beauty far outweighed her virtue.”

Grace expected just such a revelation, but now that it had come she was shocked not a lit-

tle, and she shrunk away from her husband and covered her face with her hands.

He saw this, and added, with feeling in his voice:

"But, I was only a very young man then, Grace and I had not met you up to that time."

She took down her hands and listened.

"After I saw you," he continued, "this bad woman had no charms for me; I contrasted her effrontery with your modesty; her sinfulness with your purity; her showy display with your beauty, and, need I add, my knowledge of her unworthiness made me appreciate your womanly goodness all the more."

"But it was very wicked in you to go with her at all," interrupted Grace—"very wicked, indeed."

Yes; he acknowledged that; and then she listened in silence to his eloquent defense. This he wound up by saying:

"Eight months prior to our marriage, I notified this girl that I was going to unite with a pure, honest girl, and that, in consequence, I would never see her again—that, in short, I intended to turn over a new leaf, and lead a different sort of life from what I had been doing."

"And what did she say?" asked Grace, now deeply interested.

"That I could never be happy with any one but her, and that she would meet you and tell you everything—and, finally, you would apply for a divorce; and, indeed, made many other gloomy prophesies, which I can't remember just now."

"And you fear this woman?"

"I did fear that she would separate us," he said.

The young wife folded her arms tight about her husband, and said, in a determined manner:

"No; her power to harm or separate us is gone. She has been your evil genius; I will be your guardian angel; and while she would drag you down to sin and folly, I will lead you up the narrow path of righteousness, to honor and respectability. She shall be made to feel the power of a wife's influence—that she shall."

She nestled close to his breast, and he kissed and blessed her.

"You are, indeed, my guardian angel," he said, and then he fancied she was content, and he happy.

CHAPTER XV.

MISS ROMNEY TAGGART.

WHEN Miss Romney Taggart had reached her sixth year, she was acknowledged on all sides to be exceedingly precocious, and as pretty as a picture—that is, when her face was clean enough to show the milky whiteness of her neck and shoulders, and the tangled drifts

of golden hair did not obscure the liquid blue of her big, beautiful eyes. She was not a dirty child. There were plenty in and around Rat Row on whom the dirt of the streets was allowed to remain until it became as hard as enamel, but Romney Taggart was scoured in a tub of suds every night, and went back to her maternal employment of making mud-pies in the gutters, fresh from the comb and iron.

It seemed as if she rioted in mud, and she was never known to complain of weariness in kneading the tough clay on the levee into loaves; or of twisting straw wreathes into the silken meshes of her hair.

Mrs. Taggart often threatened to whip her for being "such a dirty little thing;" but, when the hour for putting the threat into execution would arrive, Van would always enter a strong plea in extenuation, and Miss Romney invariably escaped a merited punishment.

It was these frequent interpositions on his part that led the child to look up to him as a protector; and sometimes, when she would be under sentence for some willful act or omission, she would post herself on the door of her humble home, and wait anxiously for the advent of her champion. Then, when Van would appear at last, she would run to him, place her soiled, bedimpled arms about his waist, and say, "Oh, Van, p'ease, mussah's doin' to lick me." Then the boy would pat the girl gently upon the head, and ask her what she had been doing now.

"Nussin'," was the ever-recurring reply; and then the little rogue would archly add: "Mussah don't want me to yike you, Van, and 'tause I will, she dit mad at me."

The boy knew how false this was; and had, too, a well-defined idea that it was very naughty in Romney to fib in that reckless way, but then the compliment conveyed in her words sounded so sweetly from the cherry lips, that he could not find it in his heart to reprimand her.

It may be seen from this, that Miss Taggart was getting along in the world at an amazingly rapid rate; and that Van Taggart thought the world and all of his little *protege*.

If she was bad and willful all day, in the evening she was forced to be on her good behavior, in order that Van might instruct her in the mysteries of the violin. He was patient—very patient—with her, and after she had conquered the *gamut* her strides were very rapid, until at length she could play almost as well as Van. Her voice was rich, flexible and sympathetic, and Mrs. Taggart taught her enough vocalism to warrant Van in taking her with him on his daily rounds.

She clapped her hands gleefully when Mrs. Taggart tied the cherry-colored ribbons of her broad hat under her pink chin, for the first time, and handed her down poor little dead Romney's fiddle.

"Oh, I'm so glad to git out with you, Van!" she said; "an' we'll have just the goodest time, too; won't we?"

"Yes, but you mustn't romp as yer does down here at the Row," answered Van; "p'lice 'll take yer up, if yer do."

This admonition had the desired effect, and during the first day of Romney Taggart's public life in the streets, she was very quiet and demure. The truth is, she was overawed by the crowds which collected about them everywhere they stopped; and by the grandeur of the houses, and the elegance of the ladies who occasionally paused to admire the wee musician, and listen to her rich, sweet voice, ere they dropped the penny which she had not yet learned to value.

Day by day, however, she grew familiar with the rounds, and with the fashionable people, and although always a trifle shy in the streets, she learned to raise her voice loud enough to win for her the admiration of every one who stopped for an instant to listen to the itinerant minstrels as they strolled along.

In this way three years passed, and Romney was eight, and Van almost seventeen. He felt his years keenly, and, being a spirited fellow, was growing ashamed of his employment, and desired to change it for something more dignified and remunerative.

In these three years he had improved himself very considerably. Instead of retiring early, as Romney always did, he usually remained up until midnight to read and study, and now he had progressed far enough to take Romney in charge, and he did. She was a trifle slow to learn at first, had a fixed aversion to certain letters in the alphabet, and after conquering these, took an active delight in dodging big words.

Mrs. Taggart by means of bribes in the shape of new trinkets and ribbons, coaxed her through the Second Reader, and this attained, Romney took to study with a zest, and promised, ere long, to leave Van behind.

The latter was very proud of his sister, and her improvement gave him great joy. But he did not like to see her in the streets any more, and one night he startled his mother by saying:

"Mother, after this week Romney shan't go on the street any more. I've made my mind up on that."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Taggart, "but what will the girl do?"

"Well, I don't know," was the reply. "Nothing, I guess."

"Nothing? But we are poor, you know, and—"

"I don't care," interrupted the boy; "it ain't no place for a little girl; and I'm getting ashamed of it myself."

"You?"

"Yes, me. It don't look well, nohow, for a

big, burly boy like me to go around playing a fiddle in the streets—it looks too much like begging one's living. Don't you think so?"

No, Mrs. Taggart did not think so; but she would gladly have him exchange his present occupation for something more congenial and better suited to his years.

"Well, then, I'm going to change it mighty soon," he said, determinedly. "I'm going to be a man!"

The matter was dropped then, and the next day Van and Romney were on the tramp as before.

It was a bright, lovely day in early spring, and the streets were thronged with strollers and people of leisure, who seemed quite willing to hear good music, and satisfied to pay well for it, too. As usual, the labors of the day were supplemented or brought to a close by a tour around the steamboat landing.

There were a great many boats between the foot of Vine street and Broadway in those days, and what with the shouting of mates; the singing of dusky roustabouts; the rumbling of wagons; the lumbering of drays; the screaming of steam whistles, and the clanging of bells, there was enough noise to deafen every ear in the city. Yet, amid all this tumult, there was left still a desire for music of a different type, for more dulcet strains, and Van and Romney's five o'clock concerts were generally great successes, both in an artistic and pecuniary sense.

On the evening of this spring day there was the greatest activity on the wharf, and no little excitement, owing to the fact that the new *Magnolia* was to leave at five o'clock for St. Louis on her first trip.

She was a splendid craft, and sat upon the waters like a fairy palace—all white and gold.

"Let us go aboard," said Van, after they had surveyed her from the shore for some time, "and see what she looks like inside."

Romney was so used to obeying him that she gave him her hand at once, and he led her over the gangway, and up the stairs into the cabin.

It was a charming sight to the two children; the carvings looking like crusted snow overhead; the landscape wonders on the state-room doors; while the tall mirrors in the ladies' cabin reflected back all these splendors, and seemed to enhance them a hundredfold.

"Oh! ain't it nice?" exclaimed Romney, clapping her hands. "Oh, ain't it so nice?"

Yes, Van thought it very beautiful, but he was not so enthusiastic as his companion, who stood, with mouth and eyes wide agape, drinking in the enchantment about her.

"Oh, I could stay here forever," she said, again, but before Van could answer, Chauncey Watterson tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"The ladies would be pleased to have you and your sister play something for them. Will you do it?"

"Yes, sir," replied Van, and the young musicians walked back to where Grace Watterson sat amid a crowd of gayly-attired ladies and gentlemen.

The children bowed awkwardly to their audience, and then began to play a soft, beautiful Italian air, full of tenderness and feeling.

Those who were chatting and laughing when the impromptu entertainment began ceased their frivolity when the sad voice of the music swelled up in all the roundness and ripeness of perfection, and there were tears in many eyes, including those of Grace Watterson, when the strains died away, like a mellow echo, at last.

Many bright silver pieces rewarded the effort, and while Van gathered them, Grace led Romney—pink with blushes now—to the piano, and asked her if she could play.

"No, ma'am," replied the girl; "we've no piano at home—only a fiddle."

The answer was so blunt, unaffected, and childlike withal, that Grace dropped down upon her knees, and, although childless herself, drew the pretty little dear to her bosom and kissed her on brow and cheek—never dreaming that the child she held so tightly in her arms belonged to Elinor Gregg and Chauncey Watterson, her husband.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DISCOVERY.

THE bell rung its farewell note; the shrill whistle screamed out its warning, and those who did not propose to make the voyage scrambled down the plank to the wharf. But, so occupied were Romney and Van with the attentions being showered upon them by the passengers, that they took no notice of all this, and played and sung until they paused at length from sheer exhaustion.

Then Van felt the boat trembling beneath his feet, and realized at once that the vessel was pushing out into the stream.

He grasped his little foster-sister by the hand, and cried out, excitedly:

"Come on, Romney; let's get off—come on!"

The children made their way as fast as they could through the thronged cabin, and down the winding stairs in front of the fire-doors. When at length they stood upon the lower deck, the *Magnolia* was already twenty feet from the wharf. She was swinging out into the stream, stern first, and her bow was grazing the steamer *Alma*.

"Let's jump on the *Alma*!" exclaimed Van, taking in the situation at a glance; and the next moment he had leaped.

Turning to give his hand to Romney, who

was unable to reach the deck unassisted, he saw that a crowd of deck hands, who were pulling in the hawser, had shoved her back, and now there was a gap of thirty feet between the two boats.

"Van! Van!" cried Romney, wringing her hands in the greatest alarm. "Oh, Van, come for me!—come for me!"

Her cries were drowned in the confusion of getting the steamer under weigh, and when she saw that there was no notice taken of her grief, she burst into a violent fit of weeping, and strained her eyes shoreward.

She could see Van, even through her tears, standing against one of the fenders of the *Alma*, waving his hat at her.

Crash! crash! went the machinery; then the monster wheels thumped the yellow waters of the river until they blanched white with terror, and sent wreaths of yeasty foam everywhere; and then the *Magnolia* darted like an arrow down the river, and Romney could see neither Van nor the *Alma* any more.

The child fainted, and fell just at the feet of the rough shouting mate, her fiddle and green bag under her.

He was a coarse, vulgar fellow, but he had children of his own, and he thought of them; so he stooped down and picked up the little form of the insensible child.

"What! what's this?—fainted, eh?" he muttered, and then he carried her up into the cabin, and giving her in charge of the chambermaid, resumed his duties.

When Romney opened her eyes, she found Grace Watterson bending over her, and felt her soft, white hand pressed upon her feverish head with such a tender touch that she was at once won over to her.

"Oh, where is Van? I want to go home," were her first words.

"You can't go just yet, dear," answered Grace, "and Van is doubtless by this time at home."

"But I want to go home with Van. Oh, I'll die if I don't get home to Van!" and again Romney wept—and wept, too, with a bitterness rarely felt by persons as youthful as herself.

"You musn't cry, pet," said Grace, after the first outbreak had in a measure subsided. "You must be a good little girl, and I will take you back to Van in a few days."

The child stopped crying at once, and looking earnestly, beseechingly, up into Grace's face, said:

"Will you take me back to Van and Mamma Taggart?"

"Yes, darling, I will do so—be sure of that."

Romney put her arms around the neck of Grace, and pressed up her lips to be kissed.

The career was bestowed with a hearty good-will, and the woman and child were on excellent terms for the remainder of the voy-

age, although Grace could not prevent Romney weeping herself to sleep every night, because of Van and Mamma Taggart's absence.

The attachment of Grace for the child pleased her husband, and when, on the fourth day out, the former came to him, and winding her arms about his neck in her old winsome way, said, "Chauncey, dear, I would like to adopt this little girl," he kissed her and replied, "You may do so, if the parents of the youngster consent. I'm sure I could not deny you anything."

That settled the matter, and Grace was almost as anxious to see Mrs. Taggart as was Romney.

When the boat reached St. Louis, Chauncey took his wife and their little charge to the theater.

The play was "The Stranger," and Madame Thorne, a popular actress, was to be the Mrs. Haller of the evening.

The house was crowded by a fashionable audience; diamonds and bright eyes flashed in rivalry, and the atmosphere was agreeably sweet with a hundred perfumes. All this amazed little Romney and pleased her, too, and when the orchestra rolled out an intoxicating, ravishing, delicious strain from "Il Trovatore," she clapped her hands with delight, and, but for Grace's interference, would have shouted her pleasure aloud.

The trio occupied a private box to the left of the stage, and had a fine opportunity of scanning the glittering auditorium.

After the overture had ceased, the prompter's bell tinkled musically; then the footlights flashed up, and with a great rustle, the green baize curtain flew up behind the proscenium arch, and the play was on.

Grace became at once interested in the pathetic story the players were relating, but Chauncey had seen it so often before that he felt no interest whatever, and so he turned his *lorgnette* toward the dress circle, and contented himself with languidly viewing the rows of beauties within range of his vision.

Presently Mrs. Haller spoke, and he almost started from his seat. The voice was full of pathos, rich, ripe, and well-modulated by years of study, but he recognized it at once—it was the voice of Elinor Gregg!

When he turned his gaze upon the stage, a film came between him and her, but it passed away directly, and then his eyes confirmed the evidence of his ears; it was really Elinor Gregg.

There could be no mistaking that—the same dark, lovely, beautiful woman he had driven from him eight years before. She looked up into the box as she passed off the stage, but did not seem to recognize her betrayer; and he, feeling his guilt, and fearing discovery, shrunk back behind the lace curtains and remained there, partially concealed until the fifth act terminated; then, with his brain in a

whirl, and his heart throbbing excitedly, he folded his wife's warm wrappings about her delicate shoulders, and without seeming to hear Grace's praise of Madame Thorne, hurried out of the theater.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BOY'S SACRIFICE.

VAN TAGGART went home to his mother in tears, and told her, as best he could, how he had lost little Romney forever.

Mrs. Taggart cried very hard at first, and then, as she always did, took a second and more cheerful view of the matter.

"She will come back on the boat, Van," she said; "the captain will be sure and bring her back with him."

Van was doubtful of this for a time, but finally began to think it possible, and ere the third day had passed he found himself searching the columns of the *Enquirer* for news of the "Magnolia."

At last he commenced to trace her return in the river dispatches. Now she stopped at Evansville for leaf lard; again he heard of her coming through the canal at Louisville, and then on the tenth day of her absence the *Times* noted her arrival at Madison.

There was only one hundred miles between Van and Romney now, or at least he hoped that such was the case, and he could do nothing but wander along the wharf and look eagerly for every new arrival.

It was close to sunset of the tenth day, when Van descried the stately *Magnolia* rounding the point below the City Gas Works. He found some difficulty now in keeping out of the water—he had such a wild, boyish desire to swim out and meet Romney before the crowd of hackmen and runners could swarm into the cabin, and be witnesses of the meeting, which he felt would be—at least on his side—tender and tearful.

But, however delicious a private interview would have been to the little enthusiast, the risk was altogether too great, and so he contented himself with standing at the very brink of the river, and every now and then waving his cap at the approaching steamer.

When there were but fifty yards between the *Magnolia* and the shore, a little fairy form robed in rich raiment and looking like an angel, tripped out on the guards—and recognizing Van at once, began shouting to him and waving her snowy apron, too, by way of a salute.

It would be a vain task to describe the meeting of Romney and Van. They both shouted and laughed, and then cried—cried partly because of their joy, and partly because that tears came easy, and words were hard to get out.

After the first outburst had subsided, Van held Romney out at arm's length, and surveyed her from head to foot with a critical eye.

"You're dressed durned nice," he said, at length. "Whose clothes?"

"These are mine now," replied Romney. "Mrs. Watterson made me a gift of them. Don't you think I look pretty?"

Yes, Van thought she looked very pretty—prettier than ever he had seen her look before, but he was not pleased, after all.

He felt that strangers had done a good deal more for the girl in ten days than he had done in eight years, and he was a little jealous that any person, other than himself, should be kind to her, and have this to say.

"I would buy you good clothes, too, if I only had the money," he said, with a sigh.

The girl looked into his serious face with wondering eyes, and, child though she was, detected the truth.

"You've bought me many nice things—and—and—besides, I'd rather have you with old clothes than anybody."

Van Taggart stooped down and kissed his foster-sister, and then, boy-like, blushed to the temples and told her to "come on."

She could not go without her violin; nor without saying farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Watterson, who had been so kind that she could not help loving them some; and so Van accompanied her back into the cabin, where she met those of whom she was in quest.

Grace, robed in rich pearl-colored silk, knelt down on the soft velvet carpet and wound her snowy arms around Romney, kissing her on either cheek, and saying, finally:

"Wouldn't you like to come and live with me?"

Romney looked uneasily at Van, who stood at a little distance swinging his cap backward and forward, his eyes riveted on the carpet and his cheeks glowing with blushes.

"I couldn't go away from Van and Mamma Taggart," she said; "but, I like you, too, and some time Van and me will come and play for you. Won't we?"

This query was directed at Van, who managed to stammer out that he would be glad to do so, if the lady cared for music.

Grace liked music very much, she replied, and nothing would please her better than to have Van and Romney come out to her place at Clifton, and play for her and Chauncey as often as twice a week.

"You see, we have no children," Grace said, "and we like children very much indeed."

This was then settled, and Romney and Van bid the Wattersons good-by and hurried off to Rat Row, where Mrs. Taggart had a little feast of welcome spread, and where the evening was spent in Mrs. Taggart and Van listen-

ing to the little wanderer's account of her travels.

When, however, they retired that night, Van appeared more serious than usual, and maintained this demeanor until the third day; when they all arose quite early, and the children started for Clifton full of gleeful anticipations.

With some difficulty they found Bolton Place, the suburban residence of the Wattersons. It was a grand old house, with innumerable wings, a columned colonnade, and two tapering minarets ending in gilded globes, which glittered in the sunlight like balls of fire. A low stone wall overgrown with sweetbrier skirted the vast estate on the east and south, but there was no need for any defense or guard on the north and west, since Bolton House stood on the top of a high hill which sloped north and west into Mill Creek Valley.

"It's a grand place, ain't it?" said Van, after passing the little white lodge of the porter.

"Yes, it's so nice," replied Romney. "Listen how the birds sing. They never sing that way down at the Row, do they?"

No, he never had heard them sing that way at the Row, nor indeed, for that matter, he had never heard them sing at the Row at all, and there was a sadness in his voice when he said, a moment after: "The Row is a gloomy old den, an' it ain't fit for nobody to live in."

Grace was very glad to see the young minstrels; she took them all through the fine house; served them a bounteous lunch in her own room; astonished them with the costliness and grandeur of the drawing-room; dazzled their eager eyes with myriads of flowers in the mammoth glass conservatory, where no end of cascades leaped out of mossy bank and over artificial mountain-peaks, falling into crystal basins flecked with water-lilies.

At last, after a survey of the premises, the children played some of Mozart's sweetest music from the sprightliest of all his compositions, "Don Giovanni," and then Grace treated them to a little of Balfe on the piano; after thanking her for which, the minstrels walked into the city, highly delighted with Bolton Place and its mistress.

This was especially true of Romney, who never seemed to tire of praising Grace, nor of expatiating on the beauties of her rural home, while Van acquiesced in everything she said, but grew more silent and moody every day.

Before a great many days had elapsed from the date of the first visit, Romney and Van went out to Bolton Place again, and passed an enjoyable time, and on the succeeding day Chauncey Watterson astonished the denizens of Rat Row by making a formal call on Mrs. Taggart.

He remained a long while; and when he went off at last Mrs. Taggart was crying.

Ere she could remove the traces of her grief Romney and Van came home, and then she told them frankly what Chauncey had said to her concerning Romney.

"He wants to adopt you," she said, "and take you away from us."

"But I won't go;" and this was said in a prompt and decided manner.

"That's what I told him," said Mrs. Taggart—"that you would never go," and then the girl and woman were folded close in each other's arms.

Van did not speak, but sat apart, silent and moody.

Before the children slept that night, Mrs. Taggart related to the mystified Romney the story of her advent in Rat Row, winding up the narrative, at last, by saying: "But, no real mother ever loved a real daughter better than I love you, and Van, there, I'm sure, thinks more of you than most brothers think of their sisters."

This romantic revelation did not impress the girl as it would have done an older person, but, when she kissed Van "good-night," an hour later, she blushed unconsciously, and felt very much like crying because he was not her real brother.

After she was fast asleep, Van, who always sat up later, said to his mother, in a calm, serious voice:

"It ain't right to keep Romney in this place, when she has a chance to do so much better."

Mrs. Taggart opened her eyes in astonishment, and replied: "But we couldn't give her up to strangers—we would be so lonesome for her."

"We are strangers to her, too," he said, after a pause, "and what's our lonesomeness got to do with it? It appears selfish to keep her down because by giving her up we would suffer a little. If she 'misses' this 'ere chance she'll suffer a good deal more than we will."

"But, Van, I thought you liked her too much to give her up?"

"So I does," he replied, his eyes filling; "better than anybody can guess—better than I can tell; and because I *do* like her, that's why I would sacrifice my feelings to see her get on in the world."

"And you would advise her to go to Bolton Place?"

"Yes, an' I'll go out in the morning and tell them she will go."

He broke down now, and, ashamed of his tears, turned his face to the wall.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOCKET'S REVELATION.

The next day Romney Taggart left Rat Row forever, and took up her residence at Bolton Place.

When she had gone, Van's courage gave away completely, and he laid all night in his

little attic bed and moaned out his sorrow and anguish. When he had cried himself almost sick, he joined his mother down-stairs, and said: "I'm going to hunt something to do now."

"And you will not play any more?"

"No, I'll never play any more in the streets, anyway."

During the remainder of the week he sought everywhere for employment, and he began to despair of finding anything suited to his talents, when he chanced to hear of a concert-troupe manager—who was then stopping at the Burnet House—and who was anxious to engage a couple of musicians.

Van brushed his old clothes up and called on the gentleman. Although the latter received him with a chilly indifference, Van knew he would think better of his performance than he did of his appearance, and he was right.

De Vivo was delighted with Van's playing, and finally engaged him to go with him.

"Your salary will be small at first, but I will give you chances to sing, and a good deal of instruction," he said, and the arrangements were made.

As the troupe left the city on Sunday night, and this was Saturday, Van had very little time to prepare for his departure, but he busied about and got his meager wardrobe together as best he could.

Late on Saturday evening he walked to Bolton Place to bid Romney good-by.

"You will not forget me, Romney, will you?" he asked, "when I am far away, and you are rich and happy?"

"No; I will *never* forget you, Van," she answered, "and I would like, oh, so much, to go with you!"

"You mustn't think of that," he said. "I've got a chance now, and I intend to be rich myself some day, and come back for you, if you only be a good girl and wait for me."

"Yes, I'll wait, Van, and I'll be such a good girl!"

They parted then, and the next day Van Taggart and his mother went out to the first little Romney's grave and cried upon it for an hour, and that night—for the first time in her life—Mrs. Taggart slept alone in Rat Row.

She was dreadfully lonely and miserable, but ere the close of the second week after Van's departure, she received a letter, with money in it, from him, and a railroad ticket to New York. The troupe were going to remain there for the summer, and the boy thought it altogether advisable for his mother to go on and join him.

After disposing of her effects at auction, she went out to Bolton Place and said farewell to Romney, and there was a "To Let" sign in the air at Rat Row, and the denizens of that delectable neighborhood were busy speculating on the "sudden rise of them Taggart people."

Singularly enough, the third day after Mrs. Taggart's evacuation of the premises, a carriage dashed up in front of the battered hall door, and a superbly-dressed lady—looking very much as Elinor Gregg used to look, only somewhat more faded and older—leaped out and inquired for the woman who used to live up-stairs, and had an adopted child.

"Lor' bless you, ma'am, her son is gone off with a show, an' the woman—Mrs. Taggart—went after 'im."

This was the reply, spoken in a rough voice, by a very rough, coarse-looking woman.

"She did not say where she was going?" asked the strange lady.

"No, ma'am, but I thinks she kinder hinted New York."

"New York!" repeated the stranger, biting her lip in vexation, and then, without speaking another word, stepped into the polished ebony vehicle, again, and was whirled away over the rough cobble-stone pavement in the direction of the Little Miami railroad depot.

When Romney had been at Bolton Place a month or two she became very contented, and, as was quite natural, pined less for her old life, and began to love Grace and Chauncey very dearly.

They were good to her; she felt it, too, and when Chauncey proposed to send her off to boarding-school, she protested against the plan, and almost conquered them.

However, when September came about, Chauncey insisted on her going to Pleasant Hill for the fall and winter term, at least, and off she went.

Grace missed her much, and one day she was sitting talking to Chauncey about her when she said:

"Did I ever show you the necklace the girl had on when Mrs. Taggart found her on the door-step?"

He answered that she never had, and Grace went to a chest of drawers and brought back the emeralds Elinor had placed around her baby's neck, so many years before.

Chauncey Watterson felt himself growing faint and sick, when the green jewels met his gaze, and when Grace pressed the spring and held up Elinor's picture before his eyes, he gasped for breath and fell stiff, cold and unconscious, with a dull, heavy thud upon the floor.

When he came to his senses again, he complained of weakness, but his wife was not to be thus easily disposed of, and she said calmly, but earnestly:

"Chauncey, there is a terrible mystery here, and I *must* know it."

He tried to baffle her; but it was no use, and so he told her everything—a new version of the old story he had related to her on the Mississippi—and, while he spoke, she sat with

her hands in her lap, and gazed at him with her soul in her eyes.

"You have been a bad—a bad, wicked man," she said, at length.

He only moaned in answer, and covered his face with his hands.

Then she knelt down by his side and whispered her forgiveness.

The moon was streaming through an open window into the apartment, and when he looked up into her face, his was white as chiseled marble, but full of agony and remorse.

CHAPTER XIX.

TRUE TO HER OLD LOVE.

EIGHT years have passed, and Romney Taggart is sixteen. If her childhood promised beauty, her young womanhood more than realized every promise.

She was indeed lovely. Skin white, transparent, soft, with a peachy bloom in either cheek, such as no artist could paint, and few poets could imagine. Eyes large, dewy, and blue as summer skies, and drifts of golden hair, spun as fine as floss. A form, graceful as a sylph's, and a majesty of mien royal as a queen.

She is highly accomplished, too; can sing sweeter than ever, draw passably, and play divinely. Everybody liked her at school, and those who enjoyed the privilege of her society at Bolton Place, either envied or praised her—and in either case she was complimented and flattered.

The world appeared to her—as it does to most girls of sixteen—as a great football which she was privileged to kick about at will through a field of enchantment and conquest.

She had not wholly forgotten her old life; but, eight years to a girl of sixteen appears little short of a century, and between Rat Row and Bolton Place, those eight years rolled like a great flood, the mists from which partially obscured what was beyond.

But, even through the mist, she could still discern very plainly the manly, courageous face and form of Van Taggart, and the docile, motherly woman who had nursed her so tenderly in the long ago.

She had never seen Van but twice in all those years, but she received letters every few months from him full of love and glad tidings.

He was getting on in the world quite rapidly; had quit the stage, and had become a partner in a large musical instrument manufactory near Philadelphia.

The last letter Romney had received from him, he said he was very anxious to see his little sister, and maybe he would do so in a few weeks.

She brought this letter to Chauncey, whose

especial pet she was, and, clapping her hands gleefully, said:

"Oh, papa Watterson! just think; Van is coming to see us in a few weeks! Won't we have a nice time?"

There was none of the girl's enthusiasm in his voice as he answered:

"We will be glad to see Van, but I am rather grieved that he should come at this time, when I am expecting other company."

"But, Van don't make any difference—he is one of us," said the girl, biting her lip, and with just the shadow of a pout in her face.

He looked up, and after a moment's silence said:

"My child, you have arrived at an age when you should be able to appreciate the world at its true value."

He stopped, but, as she did not venture a remark, he continued:

"You are rich—very rich; the heiress of Bolton Place, and you should be very careful that you are not led into an alliance beneath you."

The girl had never thought of Van in any other relationship than that of a brother, and now, that the possibility of him becoming anything else to her was hinted at, she felt herself growing red and confused. She managed, however, to stammer out:

"I know very well what I am now, but I have not forgotten yet what I have been—a poor, deserted outcast, penniless and friendless. Van Taggart was good to me in those early, bitter days, and were I to insult him now, I would hate myself forever after."

She spoke like a woman, keenly alive to her honor, as she understood it.

"You need not speak that way," replied Chauncey; "there is not the slightest reason for it. I like Van Taggart; feel grateful to him, too, for his kindness to you, and during the last seven years have helped him along in the world by advancing large loans on very meager security; but, I have an ambition—a proud ambition, and that is to see you married to Percy Shelby, the son of one of the leading men of Kentucky. He is coming here in a few days, and I expect you to give him a cordial welcome."

The girl blushed, begged to be excused, and ran off to her own room to cry and think and dream by turns.

The next day Percy Shelby came to Bolton Place. He was a stylish-looking young gentleman, fond of billiards, ladies and fast horses, and made himself exceedingly agreeable to Romney.

But, after what Chauncey had told her of his intentions, she felt very diffident and uncomfortable with him, and finally, on the sixth day of his visit, he bade her good-by without having alluded, in any way, to either love or marriage.

It was a brilliant May afternoon when he galloped away. Romney stood on the colonnade, with Grace and Chauncey, until he disappeared from sight. Then Grace complained of being chilly, and leaning on her husband's arm, she sauntered into the drawing-room, while Romney wandered down among the shrubbery, on the brow of the hill, and peered into the quiet valley below.

How long she stood there she could not tell, but, when her gaze was sated with the charms of hill and vale, she turned her steps homeward.

Ere she had walked far, she heard a quick, springy step behind her, and then she glanced around and stood face to face with Van Taggart—a tall, handsome man of twenty-five!

With a glad cry of welcome, she leaped into his arms, and he, smoothing back the soft silken gold from her forehead, kissed lips, brow and cheek, while she nestled closer to his breast and wept for joy.

"I have come back to claim you," he said, after a while. "I have a good start, and I think I can keep you comfortably."

Romney thought of what Chauncey had said concerning Percy Shelby, and hung down her head.

He noticed this at once, and said:

"We have been brother and sister so long, that, perhaps, you can not think we can be anything else. If, however, you don't love me with a stronger love than that"—he dropped her hand now—"why, it can't be helped, that's all."

Yes, she did love him with a stronger love, and she told him so, and then he asked her to be his wife. Her answer must have been satisfactory, for his eyes danced, and his tongue rattled out her praise as if it never would stop.

Romney did not tell Van what Chauncey had said. It would have wounded him to the quick, and he was so proud that she thought it altogether better policy to keep the matter to herself, for the present at least.

Van received a cordial welcome from both Grace and Chauncey, and the evening was spent in the glittering reception-room, with songs, music and anecdotes.

Grace and Romney retired at ten o'clock, and, ere the latter stole off to her own chamber, she told Grace every word of what had passed between Van and herself, and also of what Chauncey had said to her concerning Percy Shelby.

The good, kind Grace sympathized with Romney, and promised to reconcile her husband to her marriage with Van. In this, as in other things, she kept her word, and when Chauncey came up from the reception-room, an hour later, she broached the matter at once.

He attempted to argue the case with her, and schooled as he was in casuistry, was more

than a match for Grace. But she, finding this to be so, threw down the gauntlet bravely, and said:

"This nobility of blood is all stuff and nonsense, and this nobility of dollars is worse than foolishness; it is wicked. It is an inducement to man to commit crime in order to gain money, where money is all potent to grant patents of nobility, and gold has the power to gild vices which, without its glitter, would repel and disgust."

"But one's family pride?" he interrupted.

She shook her head solemnly, and said, looking him straight in the eyes:

"Chauncey Watterson, your family pride has already cost you sufficient suffering; have you a desire for more?"

Her words went home to his heart, and, remembering Elinor Gregg, and all those subsequent years of remorse, he said:

"It shall be as you wish. You can tell Romney I consent."

Grace did tell Romney early in the morning, and immediately after breakfast the latter communicated the glad intelligence to Van.

"We go to Cape May in June," said Romney, "and you can come down there and spend the summer with us."

"And in September I'll come out here and claim you; is that a bargain?"

It must have been, for, instead of answering in words, she put up her scarlet lips, and he kissed her.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER MANY YEARS.

A FEW nights after the events narrated in our previous chapters Romney was walking in the garden at Bolton Place.

Van had departed from his home in the east but a few hours before, and now she was dreaming and thinking, as girls will dream and think of one they love very dearly.

There was no moon, but the stars shone and the lights of Bolton House winked brightly at her.

Romney was a brave girl; her early training had contributed a great deal to strengthening her nerves, and she was not easily cowed; but, as she approached Bolton House she caught sight of a dark form—a woman's form—crouching in the shadows of the elm grove.

Instead of crying out and fainting, as some girls would have done, Romney stopped, and cried out:

"Who is that?"

The dark figure did not move.

"What do you want here?" demanded Romney.

There was no answer; but the figure came forward now, and looked the girl in the face.

The girl was frightened at last: the face of the strange woman was so white and her eyes were so large and staring.

Then, too, the face appeared familiar, but where and under what circumstances she had seen it before she could not for the life of her remember.

"I have seen you somewhere," said the girl, starting back a pace.

"And I have seen you often," replied the woman. "I have watched you when all the world slept; guarded you when you were all unconscious of the fact, have hovered over you when you little dreamed that any one but God was nigh."

The woman's voice was low, tender, earnest, but Romney took it to be the earnestness of lunacy, and shrinking further away from the stranger she said:

"You frighten me with such talk. I must go home; it's getting late."

The strange woman stepped before Romney and put out her arm.

"You must not go in that way, so cold. I can't bear that, it's too hard and cruel after these years, and—and—I love you so."

"Love me?"

"Yes, with a love as deep as that with which you love Van Taggart; a love that for your sake—for your welfare—denied itself every thing that you might not suffer; that your path might be free from the thorns that lacerated my poor feet."

Romney now remembered that she had heard that voice before—on the stage in St. Louis.

"You are an actress," she said, "but pray do not play with me in this way. You almost frighten me to death."

"And you wound me deeper even than death," replied the woman.

"Why should you take offense at my words?"

"Because I am your mother."

Romney screamed, a wild, unearthly scream, and fell in a heap at the woman's feet.

Elinor Gregg stooped down and picked her up, kissed her white lips and smoothing back her hair which had fallen in a shower over her face.

"Oh, my precious! Oh, my darling! do I hold you in my arms again?" she muttered, and then she looked up into Chauncey Watterson's excited face.

He had heard the scream, and came flying toward the spot.

"Elinor Gregg!" he exclaimed, starting back aghast.

"Yes, Chauncey Watterson, I'm Elinor Gregg, or she who once was Elinor Gregg, but who is now the people's favorite. But see, our child is recovering. She must never know how guilty her mother was—take her."

Her arms clung to the still unconscious form of her child, even after Chauncey had relieved her of the burden, and after raining a shower of kisses upon lip and brow she said, turning to him:

"You have been the cloud that darkened my whole life, and I intended to visit you with a terrible vengeance, but you were the father of my child and that alone saved you. When you took her up out of the slums and made her a lady my hate melted away, and to-night I love you again—for her sake. I shall never come here again—never trouble you or yours. Good-by forever."

"Elinor!" he gasped, "Elinor!"

It was no use in calling, however; she was flitting down among the elms like a dark shadow, and soon the darkness eat the shadow up, and she was gone.

Romney was very ill for a week after that; her terror brought about spasms, and when on the sixth day she was able to get up, she asked Chauncey if he really believed the strange woman was her mother.

"I don't know," he answered. "She might be."

"More likely an escaped lunatic from Longview," ventured Grace. "You see the asylum is just over the hill there."

That looked very plausible, Romney thought; but Chauncey did not say a word—he could not trust himself to speak.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TEMPEST.

It was a sultry June night at Cape May, and the beach was thronged with visitors endeavoring to catch whatever little breeze floated in from the wilderness of waters, which stretched so far away to the south and west. The moon had been shining very clearly, but, by eight o'clock, a warm south wind sprung up, and drove masses of ragged black clouds over its golden disk. Notwithstanding this obscured the moon's glare, there was a sort of a twilight left, and those who had come to the Cape for years pronounced it one of the most delightful nights they had ever experienced there.

Van and Romney, arm in arm, were strolling among the pebbles, close to the water's edge, talking of the past and building bright phantasies for the future, while Grace and Chauncey sat down on a huge round boulder and looked far out to sea.

What Grace was thinking about I cannot say, but Chauncey was wondering if ever he should stand face to face with Elinor Gregg again. He knew now she was not dead, and he knew, too, that the great marble pile in Dellville graveyard was little else than a beautiful mockery.

While he sat there in silence a merry laugh sounded—a laugh that was very familiar to his ear, and for the nonce he thought it was only the music of his imagination.

The white sail of a boat drifted by, within a rod of the shore, and then that familiar laugh disappeared, when the sail dipped out of view.

"Let us go out on the water," said Grace, all at once, and rising.

"Very well, dear," he answered, "but where are Van and Romney, I wonder?"

"Oh, never mind them now. I prefer to sail along with you, to-night!" said Grace.

He was flattered by her speech, and they went in quest of a boat.

They found one readily enough, and a half an hour after they were skimming over the dark waters of old ocean, their sail gleaming above their heads like the pinion of some aquatic bird.

They talked of their old courting days; of the pleasures they had known together; and still they sailed on and on, until the land appeared only like a black line behind them.

"Let us go back," he said, at length; "we are already far out, and I'm afraid we are going to have a little blow before long."

Grace glanced upward, and for the first time, noticed that heavy masses of dark, ominous clouds were trailing their ebon robes low down over the waters, and that, away off to the south, the sky was rapidly assuming an ugly straw-color.

"Yes, Chauncey, let us get in as soon as possible," answered Grace, wrapping her shawl about her shoulders, and sitting quietly down, her eyes fixed steadily upon the distant horizon.

The waves began to beat against the side of the boat, with a noisy thud, and now the rush of the wind could be heard, and the straw-color in the sky grew brighter, lighting up the faces in the boat with a lurid light and giving to Grace a ghostly pallor. The sail partially screened Chauncey's face from the glare, but it was pale as death with fear.

On, on the storm came, and like a thing sentient, the boat skimmed over the waves, its prow directed at the lights of the Atlantic House.

The roar of the coming tempest caused the saunterers on the beach to scamper to their lodgings, and when the sail of Chauncey Watterson's boat could be seen distinctly through the blackness, there was only one woman on all that great curving shore to welcome it.

She stood with her hand upon a boat; and peered eagerly into the gloom.

Now she shaded her vision with her hand, and the wind caught up her wealth of silken hair and it fluttered like a black wing behind. Hers was a regal figure, and the simple Swiss dress she wore clung to her form, and outlined its statuesque beauty.

With a rush and a roar, like the crack of doom, the storm struck the little boat, and scooped a sheet of the white spray over its inmates, drenching them to the skin. The mast strained and bent forward, and the sail, which Chauncey was doing his best to reef, flew into shreds, and dragged the tiny vessel almost under the white-capped breakers.

At this moment, the white woman on the beach, with almost superhuman strength, pushed her boat out, pulling away at the oars with the dash of an expert.

"I will save her," she muttered, "to show him how truly—how much I loved him!"

She was too late, however. Ere she reached the boat it parted, and Grace, with the strength of desperation, clung to a portion of the wreck, while Chauncey, stunned by the falling mast, grasped it firmly, and called out to Grace:

"Grace, darling, hold fast for your life; there is some one coming to our aid." Then he became unconscious, through pain, and the next moment was swept up on the beach.

Grace was not strong enough to make a struggle with the winds and waves, and, just as the white woman reached her, she let her hold go, and sunk beneath the angry waters.

The white figure stood appalled for an instant; then, casting her eyes heavenward, she leaped into the water. Her robe floated for a second, and then she disappeared into the seething depths.

Two hours after—when the storm had spent its force—the crowd collected on the beach, saw something white gleaming in the waters, and, before any one could stir, the bodies of Grace Watterson and Elinor Gregg, locked tightly in each other's arms, were washed up on the sand.

Of all that throng Chauncey Watterson alone understood the nature of that tragedy, and sinking down upon his knees—there, on the strand, with the cold moonlight falling upon himself and the dead, he prayed for God to pardon and call him home at once.

But, God chose that he should live on, that he might repent for the evil he had worked; and he does live to this day—a gray-haired, melancholy man; a hermit amid the splendor of Bolton Place.

Romney was never told the sequel of Elinor Gregg's life, and one year after the death of Grace, she was married to the only man she ever loved—Van Buren Taggart, who had so tenderly cared for the Foundling of Rat Row.

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